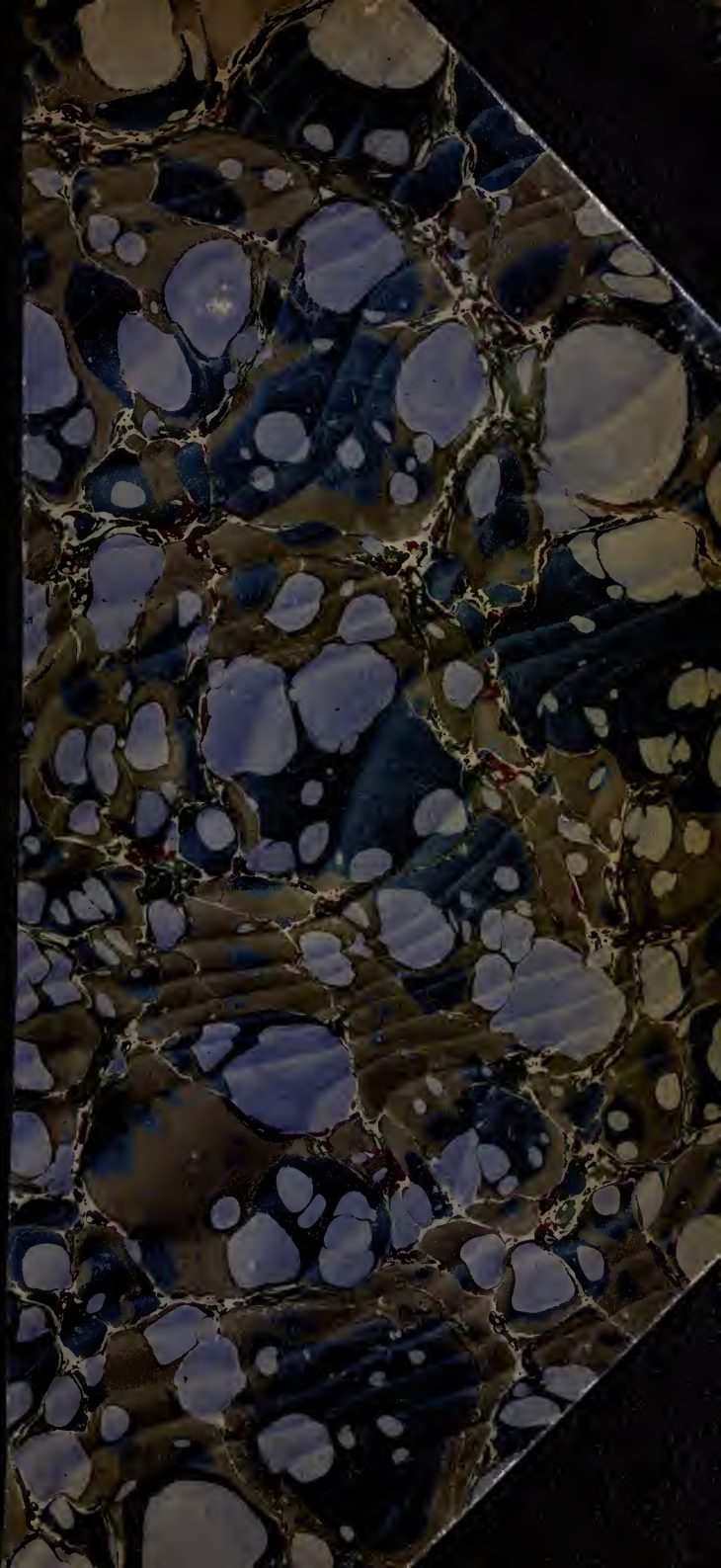
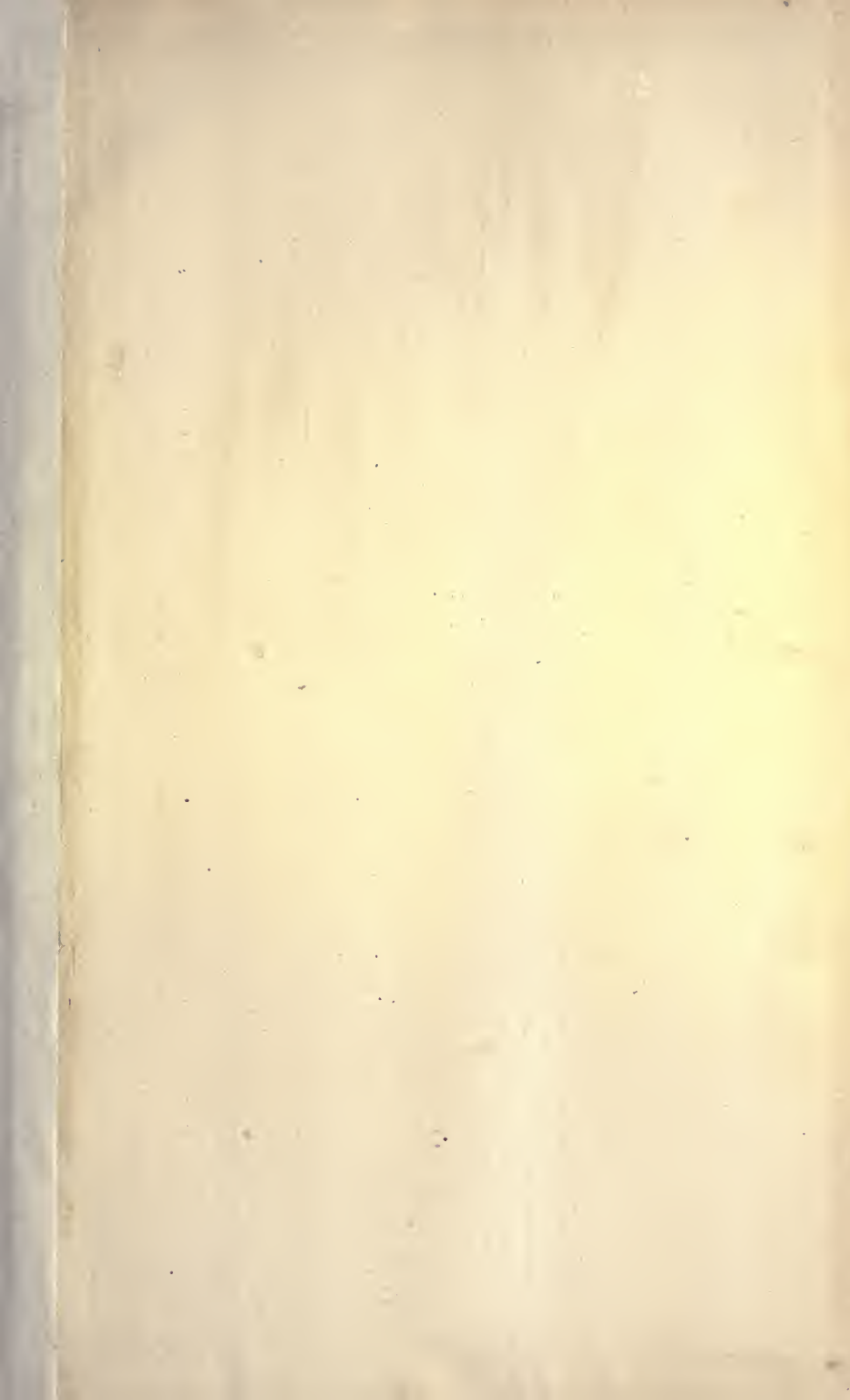


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Illustrated Sterling Edition

"MY NOVEL"

THREE VOLUMES IN TWO
VOL. II.

By PISISTRATUS CAXTON

PAUL CLIFFORD
TOMLINSONIANA

BY
EDWARD BULWER LYTTON



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"MY NOVEL."

BOOK ELEVENTH.

INITIAL CHAPTER.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF HATE AS AN AGENT IN CIVILIZED LIFE.

It is not an uncommon crotchet amongst benevolent men to maintain that wickedness is necessarily a sort of insanity, and that nobody would make a violent start out of the straight path unless stung to such disorder by a bee in his bonnet. Certainly when some very clever, well-educated person like our friend, Randal Leslie, acts upon the fallacious principle that "roguery is the best policy," it is curious to see how many points he has in common with the insane: what over-cunning, what irritable restlessness, what suspicious belief that the rest of the world are in a conspiracy against him, which it requires all his wit to baffle and turn to his own proper aggrandizement and profit. Perhaps some of my readers may have thought that I have represented Randal as unnaturally far-fetched in his schemes, too wiredrawn and subtle in his speculations; yet that is commonly the case with very refining intellects, when they choose to play the knave; it helps to disguise from themselves the ugliness of their ambition, just as a philosopher delights in the ingenuity of some metaphysical process, which ends in what plain men call "atheism," who would be infinitely shocked and offended if he were called an atheist.

Having premised thus much on behalf of the "Natural" in Randal Leslie's character, I must here fly off to say a word or two on the agency in human life exercised by a passion rarely seen without a mask in our debonair and civilized age,—I mean Hate.

In the good old days of our forefathers, when plain speaking and hard blows were in fashion, when a man had his heart at the tip of his tongue, and four feet of sharp iron dangling at his side, Hate played an honest, open part in the theatre of the world. In fact, when we read History, Hate seems to have "starred it" on the stage. But now, where is Hate? Who ever sees its face? Is it that smiling, good-tempered creature, that presses you by the hand so cordially, or that dignified figure of state that calls you its "Right Honourable friend"? Is it that bowing, grateful dependent; is it that soft-eyed Amaryllis? Ask not, guess not: you will only know it to be hate when the poison is in your cup, or the poniard in your breast. In the Gothic age, grim Humour painted "the Dance of Death;" in our polished century, some sardonic wit should give us "the Masquerade of Hate."

Certainly, the counter-passion betrays itself with ease to our gaze. Love is rarely a hypocrite. But Hate — how detect, and how guard against it? It lurks where you least suspect it; it is created by causes that you can the least foresee; and Civilization multiplies its varieties, whilst it favours its disguise: for Civilization increases the number of contending interests, and Refinement renders more susceptible to the least irritation the cuticle of Self-Love. But Hate comes covertly forth from some self-interest we have crossed, or some self-love we have wounded; and, dullards that we are, how seldom we are aware of our offence! You may be hated by a man you have never seen in your life: you may be hated as often by one you have loaded with benefits; you may so walk as not to tread on a worm; but you must sit fast on your easy-chair till you are carried out to your bier, if you would be sure not to tread on some snake of a foe. But, then, what harm does the hate do us? Very often the harm is as unseen by the world as the hate is unrecognized

by us. It may come on us, unawares, in some solitary by-way of our life; strike us in our unsuspecting privacy; thwart us in some blessed hope we have never told to another; for the moment the world sees that it is Hate that strikes us, its worst power of mischief is gone.

We have a great many names for the same passion,—Envy, Jealousy, Spite, Prejudice, Rivalry; but they are so many synonyms for the one old heathen demon. When the death-giving shaft of Apollo sent the plague to some unhappy Achæan, it did not much matter to the victim whether the god were called Helios or Smintheus.

No man you ever met in the world seemed more raised above the malice of Hate than Audley Egerton: even in the hot war of politics he had scarcely a personal foe; and in private life he kept himself so aloof and apart from others that he was little known, save by the benefits the waste of his wealth conferred. That the hate of any one could reach the austere statesman on his high pinnacle of esteem,—you would have smiled at the idea! But Hate is now, as it ever has been, an actual Power amidst “the Varieties of Life;” and, in spite of bars to the door, and policemen in the street, no one can be said to sleep in safety while there wakes the eye of a single foe.

CHAPTER II.

THE glory of Bond Street is no more. The title of Bond Street Lounger has faded from our lips. In vain the crowd of equipages and the blaze of shops: the renown of Bond Street was in its pavement, its pedestrians. Art thou old enough, O reader! to remember the Bond Street Lounger and his incomparable generation? For my part, I can just recall the decline of the grand era. It was on its wane when, in the ambition of boyhood, I first began to muse upon high neckcloths and Wellington boots. But the ancient *habitués* — the

magni nominis umbræ, contemporaries of Brummell in his zenith, boon companions of George IV. in his regency — still haunted the spot. From four to six in the hot month of June, they sauntered stately to and fro, looking somewhat mournful even then, foreboding the extinction of their race. The Bond Street Lounger was rarely seen alone: he was a social animal, and walked arm in arm with his fellow-man. He did not seem born for the cares of these ruder times; not made was he for an age in which Finsbury returns members to parliament. He loved his small talk; and never since then has talk been so pleasingly small. Your true Bond Street Lounger had a very dissipated look. His youth had been spent with heroes who loved their bottle. He himself had perhaps supped with Sheridan. He was by nature a spend-thrift: you saw it in the roll of his walk. Men who make money rarely saunter; men who save money rarely swagger. But saunter and swagger both united to stamp PRODIGAL on the Bond Street Lounger. And so familiar as he was with his own set, and so amusingly supercilious with the vulgar residue of mortals whose faces were strange to Bond Street! But he is gone. The world, though sadder for his loss, still strives to do its best without him; and our young men, nowadays, attend to model cottages, and incline to Tractarianism. Still the place, to an unreflecting eye, has its brilliancy and bustle; but it is a thoroughfare, not a lounge. And adown the thoroughfare, somewhat before the hour when the throng is thickest, passed two gentlemen of an appearance exceedingly out of keeping with the place. Yet both had the air of men pretending to aristocracy, — an old-world air of respectability and stake in the country, and Church-and-Stateism. The burlier of the two was even rather a beau in his way. He had first learned to dress, indeed, when Bond Street was at its acme, and Brummell in his pride. He still retained in his garb the fashion of his youth; only what then had spoken of the town, now betrayed the life of the country. His neck-cloth ample and high, and of snowy whiteness, set off to comely advantage a face smooth-shaven, and of clear florid hues; his coat of royal blue, with buttons in which you might

have seen yourself *veluti in speculum*, was rather jauntily buttoned across a waist that spoke of lusty middle age, free from the ambition, the avarice, and the anxieties that fret Londoners into threadpapers; his small-clothes, of grayish drab, loose at the thigh and tight at the knee, were made by Brummell's own breeches-maker, and the gaiters to match (thrust half-way down the calf), had a manly dandyism that would have done honour to the beau-ideal of a county member. The profession of this gentleman's companion was unmistakable,—the shovel-hat, the clerical cut of the coat, the neckcloth without collar, that seemed made for its accessory the band, and something very decorous, yet very mild, in the whole mien of this personage, all spoke of one who was every inch the gentleman and the parson.

"No," said the portlier of these two persons,— "no, I can't say I like Frank's looks at all. There's certainly something on his mind. However, I suppose it will be all out this evening."

"He dines with you at your hotel, Squire? Well, you must be kind to him. We can't put old heads upon young shoulders."

"I don't object to his head being young," returned the squire; "but I wish he had a little of Randal Leslie's good sense in it. I see how it will end; I must take him back to the country; and if he wants occupation, why, he shall keep the hounds, and I'll put him into Brooksby farm."

"As for the hounds," replied the parson, "hounds necessitate horses; and I think more mischief comes to a young man of spirit from the stables than from any other place in the world. They ought to be exposed from the pulpit, those stables!" added Mr. Dale, thoughtfully; "see what they entailed upon Nimrod! But Agriculture is a healthful and noble pursuit, honoured by sacred nations, and cherished by the greatest men in classical times. For instance, the Athenians were —"

"Bother the Athenians!" cried the squire, irreverently; "you need not go so far back for an example. It is enough for a Hazeldean that his father and his grandfather and his

great-grandfather all farmed before him; and a devilish deal better, I take it, than any of those musty old Athenians,—no offence to them. But I'll tell you one thing, Parson, a man to farm well, and live in the country, should have a wife; it is half the battle."

"As to a battle, a man who is married is pretty sure of half, though not always the better half, of it," answered the parson, who seemed peculiarly facetious that day. "Ah, Squire, I wish I could think Mrs. Hazeldean right in her conjecture!—you would have the prettiest daughter-in-law in the three kingdoms. And I do believe that, if I could have a good talk with the young lady apart from her father, we could remove the only objection I know to the marriage. Those Popish errors —"

"Ah, very true!" cried the squire; "that Pope sticks hard in my gizzard. I could excuse her being a foreigner, and not having, I suppose, a shilling in her pocket — bless her handsome face!—but to be worshipping images in her room instead of going to the parish church, that will never do. But you think you could talk her out of the Pope, and into the family pew?"

"Why, I could have talked her father out of the Pope, only, when he had not a word to say for himself, he bolted out of the window. Youth is more ingenuous in confessing its errors."

"I own," said the squire, "that both Harry and I had a favourite notion of ours till this Italian girl got into our heads. Do you know we both took a great fancy to Randal's little sister,—pretty, blushing, English-faced girl as ever you saw. And it went to Harry's good heart to see her so neglected by that silly, fidgety mother of hers, her hair hanging about her ears; and I thought it would be a fine way to bring Randal and Frank more together, and enable me to do something for Randal himself,—a good boy with Hazeldean blood in his veins. But Violante is so handsome, that I don't wonder at the boy's choice; and then it is our fault,—we let them see so much of each other as children. However, I should be very angry if Rickeybockey had been playing sly,

and running away from the Casino in order to give Frank an opportunity to carry on a clandestine intercourse with his daughter."

"I don't think that would be like Riccabocca; more like him to run away in order to deprive Frank of the best of all occasions to court Violante, if he so desired; for where could he see more of her than at the Casino?"

SQUIRE. — "That's well put. Considering he was only a foreign doctor, and, for aught we know, once went about in a caravan, he is a gentleman-like fellow, that Rickeybockey. I speak of people as I find them. But what is your notion about Frank? I see you don't think he is in love with Violante, after all. Out with it, man; speak plain."

PARSON. — "Since you so urge me, I own I do not think him in love with her; neither does my Carry, who is uncommonly shrewd in such matters."

SQUIRE. — "Your Carry, indeed! — as if she were half as shrewd as my Harry. Carry — nonsense!"

PARSON (reddening). — "I don't want to make invidious remarks; but, Mr. Hazeldean, when you sneer at my Carry, I should not be a man if I did not say that —"

SQUIRE (interrupting). — "She is a good little woman enough; but to compare her to my Harry!"

PARSON. — "I don't compare her to your Harry; I don't compare her to any woman in England, sir. But you are losing your temper, Mr. Hazeldean!"

SQUIRE. — "I!"

PARSON. — "And people are staring at you, Mr. Hazeldean. For decency's sake, compose yourself, and change the subject. We are just at the Albany. I hope that we shall not find poor Captain Higginbotham as ill as he represents himself in his letter. Ah, is it possible? No, it cannot be. Look — look!"

SQUIRE. — "Where — what — where? Don't pinch so hard. Bless me, do you see a ghost?"

PARSON. — "There! the gentleman in black!"

SQUIRE. — "Gentleman in black! What! in broad daylight! Nonsense!"

Here the parson made a spring forward, and, catching the arm of the person in question, who himself had stopped, and was gazing intently on the pair, exclaimed,—

“Sir, pardon me; but is not your name Fairfield? Ah, it is Leonard,—it is—my dear, dear boy! What joy! So altered, so improved, but still the same honest face. Squire, come here—your old friend, Leonard Fairfield.”

“And he wanted to persuade me,” said the squire, shaking Leonard heartily by the hand, “that you were the Gentleman in Black; but, indeed, he has been in strange humours and tantrums all the morning. Well, Master Lenny; why, you are grown quite a gentleman! The world thrives with you, eh? I suppose you are head-gardener to some grandee.”

“Not that, sir,” said Leonard, smiling; “but the world has thriven with me at last, though not without some rough usage at starting. Ah, Mr. Dale, you can little guess how often I have thought of you and your discourse on Knowledge; and, what is more, how I have lived to feel the truth of your words, and to bless the lesson.”

PARSON (much touched and flattered). — “I expected nothing less from you, Leonard; you were always a lad of great sense, and sound judgment. So you have thought of my little discourse on Knowledge, have you?”

SQUIRE. — “Hang knowledge! I have reason to hate the word. It burned down three ricks of mine; the finest ricks you ever set eyes on, Mr. Fairfield.”

PARSON. — “That was not knowledge, Squire; that was ignorance.”

SQUIRE. — “Ignorance! The deuce it was. I’ll just appeal to you, Mr. Fairfield. We have been having sad riots in the shire, and the ringleader was just such another lad as you were!”

LEONARD. — “I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Hazledean. In what respect?”

SQUIRE. — “Why, he was a village genius, and always reading some cursed little tract or other; and got mighty discontented with King, Lords, and Commons, I suppose, and went about talking of the wrongs of the poor, and the crimes

of the rich, till, by Jove, sir, the whole mob rose one day with pitchforks and sickles, and smash went Farmer Smart's thrashing-machines; and on the same night my ricks were on fire. We caught the rogues, and they were all tried; but the poor deluded labourers were let off with a short imprisonment. The village genius, thank Heaven, is sent packing to Botany Bay."

LEONARD. — "But did his books teach him to burn ricks and smash machines?"

PARSON. — "No; he said quite the contrary, and declared that he had no hand in those misdoings."

SQUIRE. — "But he was proved to have excited, with his wild talk, the boobies who had! 'Gad, sir, there was a hypocritical Quaker once, who said to his enemy, 'I can't shed thy blood, friend, but I will hold thy head under water till thou art drowned.' And so there is a set of demagogical fellows, who keep calling out, 'Farmer, this is an oppressor, and Squire, that is a vampire! But no violence! Don't smash their machines, don't burn their ricks! Moral force, and a curse on all tyrants!' Well, and if poor Hodge thinks moral force is all my eye, and that the recommendation is to be read backwards, in the devil's way of reading the Lord's prayer, I should like to know which of the two ought to go to Botany Bay,—Hodge, who comes out like a man, if he thinks he is wronged, or t' other sneaking chap, who makes use of his knowledge to keep himself out of the scrape?"

PARSON. — "It may be very true; but when I saw that poor fellow at the bar, with his intelligent face, and heard his bold clear defence, and thought of all his hard struggles for knowledge, and how they had ended, because he forgot that knowledge is like fire, and must not be thrown amongst flax,—why, I could have given my right hand to save him. And, oh, Squire, do you remember his poor mother's shriek of despair when he was sentenced to transportation for life -- I hear it now! And what, Leonard — what do you think had misled him? At the bottom of all the mischief was a tinker's bag. You cannot forget Sprott?"

LEONARD. — "Tinker's bag! Sprott!"

SQUIRE. — "That rascal, sir, was the hardest follow to nab you could possibly conceive; as full of quips and quirks as an Old Bailey lawyer. But we managed to bring it home to him. Lord! his bag was choke-full of tracts against every man who had a good coat on his back; and as if that was not enough, cheek by jowl with the tracts were lucifers, contrived on a new principle, for teaching my ricks the theory of spontaneous combustion. The labourers bought the lucifers —"

PARSON. — "And the poor village genius bought the tracts."

SQUIRE. — "All headed with a motto, 'To teach the working classes that knowledge is power.' So that I was right in saying that knowledge had burnt my ricks; knowledge inflamed the village genius, the village genius inflamed fellows more ignorant than himself, and they inflamed my stack-yard. However, lucifers, tracts, village genius, and Sprott are all off to Botany Bay; and the shire has gone on much the better for it. So no more of your knowledge for me, begging your pardon, Mr. Fairfield. Such uncommonly fine ricks as mine were too! I declare, Parson, you are looking as if you felt pity for Sprott; and I saw you, indeed, whispering to him as he was taken out of court."

PARSON (looking sheepish). — "Indeed, Squire, I was only asking him what had become of his donkey, an unoffending creature."

SQUIRE. — "Unoffending! Upset me amidst a thistle-bed in my own village green! I remember it. Well, what did he say *had* become of the donkey?"

PARSON. — "He said but one word; but that showed all the vindictiveness of his disposition. He said it with a horrid wink, that made my blood run cold. 'What's become of your poor donkey?' said I, and he answered —"

SQUIRE. — "Go on. He answered —"

PARSON. — "'Sausages.'"

SQUIRE. — "Sausages! Like enough; and sold to the poor; and that's what the poor will come to if they listen to such revolutionizing villains. Sausages! Donkey sausages!" — (spitting) — "'T is bad as eating one another; perfect cannibalism."

Leonard, who had been thrown into grave thought by the history of Sprott and the village genius, now pressing the parson's hand, asked permission to wait on him before Mr. Dale quitted London; and was about to withdraw, when the parson, gently detaining him, said, "No; don't leave me yet, Leonard,— I have so much to ask you, and to talk about. I shall be at leisure shortly. We are just now going to call on a relation of the squire's, whom you must recollect, I am sure,— Captain Higginbotham — Barnabas Higginbotham. He is very poorly."

"And I am sure he would take it kind in you to call too," said the squire, with great good-nature.

LEONARD. — "Nay, sir, would not that be a great liberty?"

SQUIRE. — "Liberty! To ask a poor sick gentleman how he is? Nonsense. And I say, sir, perhaps, as no doubt you have been living in town, and know more of new-fangled notions than I do,— perhaps you can tell us whether or not it is all humbug,— that new way of doctoring people."

LEONARD. — "What new way, sir. There are so many."

SQUIRE. — "Are there? Folks in London *do* look uncommonly sickly. But my poor cousin (he was never a Solomon) has got hold, he says, of a homely — homely — What's the word, Parson?"

PARSON. — "Homœopathist."

SQUIRE. — "That's it. You see the captain went to live with one Sharpe Currie, a relation who had a great deal of money, and very little liver; — made the one, and left much of the other in Ingee, you understand. The captain had *expectations* of the money. Very natural, I dare say; but Lord, sir, what do you think has happened? Sharpe Currie has done him. Would not die, sir; got back his liver, and the captain has lost his own. Strangest thing you ever heard. And then the ungrateful old Nabob has dismissed the captain, saying, 'He can't bear to have invalids about him;' and is going to marry, and I have no doubt will have children by the dozen!"

PARSON. — "It was in Germany, at one of the Spas, that Mr. Currie recovered; and as he had the selfish inhumanity to make the captain go through a course of waters simultane-

ously with himself, it has so chanced that the same waters that cured Mr. Currie's liver have destroyed Captain Higginbotham's. An English homœopathic physician, then staying at the Spa, has attended the captain hither, and declares that he will restore him by infinitesimal doses of the same chemical properties that were found in the waters which diseased him. Can there be anything in such a theory?"

LEONARD. — "I once knew a very able, though eccentric homœopathist, and I am inclined to believe there may be something in the system. My friend went to Germany; it may possibly be the same person who attends the captain. May I ask his name?"

SQUIRE. — "Cousin Barnabas does not mention it. You may ask it of himself, for here we are at his chambers. I say, Parson" (whispering slyly), "if a small dose of what hurt the captain is to cure him, don't you think the proper thing would be a — legacy? Ha! ha!"

PARSON (trying not to laugh). — "Hush, Squire. Poor human nature! We must be merciful to its infirmities. Come in, Leonard."

Leonard, interested in his doubt whether he might thus chance again upon Dr. Morgan, obeyed the invitation, and with his two companions followed the woman, who "did for the captain and his rooms," across the small lobby, into the presence of the sufferer.

CHAPTER III.

WHATEVER the disposition towards merriment at his cousin's expense entertained by the squire, it vanished instantly at the sight of the captain's doleful visage and emaciated figure.

"Very good in you to come to town to see me,— very good in you, cousin, and in you, too, Mr. Dale. How very well you are both looking! I'm a sad wreck. You might count every bone in my body."

"Hazeldean air and roast beef will soon set you up, my boy," said the squire, kindly. "You were a great goose to leave them, and these comfortable rooms of yours in the Albany."

"They *are* comfortable, though not showy," said the captain, with tears in his eyes. "I had done my best to make them so. New carpets, this very chair — (morocco!), that Japan cat (holds toast and muffins) — just when — just when" — (the tears here broke forth, and the captain fairly whimpered) — "just when that ungrateful, bad-hearted man wrote me word 'he was — was dying and lone in the world;' and — and — to think what I've gone through for him; — and to treat me so! Cousin William, he has grown as hale as yourself, and — and —"

"Cheer up, cheer up!" cried the compassionate squire. "It is a very hard case, I allow. But you see, as the old proverb says, 'T is ill waiting for a dead man's shoes;' and in future — I don't mean offence — but I think if you would calculate less on the livers of your relations, it would be all the better for your own. Excuse me!"

"Cousin William," replied the poor captain, "I am sure I never calculated; but still, if you had seen that deceitful man's good-for-nothing face — as yellow as a guinea — and have gone through all I've gone through, you would have felt cut to the heart, as I do. I can't bear ingratitude. I never could. But let it pass. Will that gentleman take a chair?"

PARSON. — "Mr. Fairfield has kindly called with us, because he knows something of this system of homœopathy which you have adopted, and may, perhaps, know the practitioner. What is the name of your doctor?"

CAPTAIN (looking at his watch). — "That reminds me" (swallowing a globule). "A great relief these little pills — after the physic I've taken to please that malignant man. He always tried his doctor's stuff upon me. But there's another world, and a juster!"

With that pious conclusion the captain again began to weep.

"Touched," muttered the squire, with his forefinger on his forehead. "You seem to have a good tidy sort of a nurse here, Cousin Barnabas. I hope she's pleasant, and lively, and don't let you take on so."

"Hist! — don't talk of her. All mercenary; every bit of her fawning! Would you believe it? I give her ten shillings a week, besides all that goes down of my pats of butter and rolls, and I overheard the jade saying to the laundress that 'I could not last long; and she'd — EXPECTATIONS!' Ah, Mr. Dale, when one thinks of the sinfulness there is in this life! But I'll not think of it. No, I'll not. Let us change the subject. You were asking my doctor's name. It is —"

Here the woman with "expectations" threw open the door, and suddenly announced "DR. MORGAN."

CHAPTER IV.

THE parson started, and so did Leonard.

The homœopathist did not at first notice either. With an unobservant bow to the visitors, he went straight to the patient, and asked, "How go the symptoms?"

Therewith the captain commenced, in a tone of voice like a schoolboy reciting the catalogue of the ships in Homer. He had been evidently conning the symptoms, and learning them by heart. Nor was there a single nook or corner in his anatomical organization, so far as the captain was acquainted with that structure, but what some symptom or other was dragged therefrom, and exposed to day. The squire listened with horror to the morbid inventory, muttering at each dread interval, "Bless me! Lord bless me! What, more still! Death would be a very happy release!" Meanwhile the doctor endured the recital with exemplary patience, noting down in the leaves of his pocketbook what appeared to him the salient points in this fortress of disease to which he

had laid siege, and then, drawing forth a minute paper, said,—

“Capital,—nothing can be better. This powder must be dissolved in eight tablespoonfuls of water; one spoonful every two hours.”

“Tablespoonful?”

“Tablespoonful.”

“‘Nothing can be better,’ did you say, sir?” repeated the squire, who in his astonishment at that assertion applied to the captain’s description of his sufferings, had hitherto hung fire,—“nothing can be better?”

“For the diagnosis, sir!” replied Dr. Morgan.

“For the dogs’ noses, very possibly,” quoth the squire; “but for the inside of Cousin Higginbotham, I should think nothing could be worse.”

“You are mistaken, sir,” replied Dr. Morgan. “It is not the captain who speaks here,—it is his liver. Liver, sir, though a noble, is an imaginative organ, and indulges in the most extraordinary fictions. Seat of poetry and love and jealousy—the liver. Never believe what it says. You have no idea what a liar it is! But—ahem—ahem. Cott—I think I’ve seen you before, sir. Surely your name’s Hazeldean?”

“William Hazeldean, at your service, Doctor. But where have you seen me?”

“On the hustings at Lansmere. You were speaking on behalf of your distinguished brother, Mr. Egerton.”

“Hang it!” cried the squire: “I think it must have been my liver that spoke there! for I promised the electors that that half-brother of mine would stick by the land, and I never told a bigger lie in my life!”

Here the patient, reminded of his other visitors, and afraid he was going to be bored with the enumeration of the squire’s wrongs, and probably the whole history of his duel with Captain Dashmore, turned with a languid wave of his hand, and said, “Doctor, another friend of mine, the Rev. Mr. Dale, and a gentleman who is acquainted with homœopathy.”

“Dale? What, more old friends!” cried the doctor, ris-

ing; and the parson came somewhat reluctantly from the window nook, to which he had retired. The parson and the homœopathist shook hands.

"We have met before on a very mournful occasion," said the doctor, with feeling.

The parson held his finger to his lips, and glanced towards Leonard. The doctor stared at the lad, but he did not recognize in the person before him the gaunt, care-worn boy whom he had placed with Mr. Prickett, until Leonard smiled and spoke. And the smile and the voice sufficed.

"Cott! and it is the poy!" cried Dr. Morgan; and he actually caught hold of Leonard, and gave him an affectionate Welch hug. Indeed, his agitation at these several surprises became so great that he stopped short, drew forth a globule — "*Aconite*,— good against nervous shocks!" and swallowed it incontinently.

"Gad," said the squire, rather astonished, "'t is the first doctor I ever saw swallow his own medicine! There must be something in it."

The captain now, highly disgusted that so much attention was withdrawn from his own case, asked in a querulous voice, "And as to diet? What shall I have for dinner?"

"A friend!" said the doctor, wiping his eyes.

"Zounds!" cried the squire, retreating, "do you mean to say, that the British laws (to be sure they are very much changed of late) allow you to diet your patients upon their fellow-men? Why, Parson, this is worse than the donkey sausages."

"Sir," said Dr. Morgan, gravely, "I mean to say, that it matters little what we eat in comparison with care as to whom we eat with. It is better to exceed a little with a friend than to observe the strictest regimen, and eat alone. Talk and laughter help the digestion, and are indispensable in affections of the liver. I have no doubt, sir, that it was my patient's agreeable society that tended to restore to health his dyspeptic relative, Mr. Sharpe Currie."

The captain groaned aloud.

"And, therefore, if one of you gentlemen will stay and

dine with Mr. Higginbotham, it will greatly assist the effects of his medicine."

The captain turned an imploring eye, first towards his cousin, then towards the parson.

"I'm engaged to dine with my son — very sorry," said the squire. "But Dale, here —"

"If he will be so kind," put in the captain, "we might cheer the evening with a game at whist,— double dummy."

Now, poor Mr. Dale had set his heart on dining with an old college friend, and having no stupid, prosy double dummy, in which one cannot have the pleasure of scolding one's partner, but a regular orthodox rubber, with the pleasing prospect of scolding all the three other performers. But as his quiet life forbade him to be a hero in great things, the parson had made up his mind to be a hero in small ones. Therefore, though with rather a rueful face, he accepted the captain's invitation, and promised to return at six o'clock to dine. Meanwhile he must hurry off to the other end of the town, and excuse himself from the pre-engagement he had already formed. He now gave his card, with the address of a quiet family hotel thereon, to Leonard, and not looking quite so charmed with Dr. Morgan as he was before that unwelcome prescription, he took his leave. The squire too, having to see a new churn, and execute various commissions for his Harry, went his way (not, however, till Dr. Morgan had assured him that, in a few weeks, the captain might safely remove to Hazeldean); and Leonard was about to follow, when Morgan hooked his arm in his old *protégé's*, and said, "But I must have some talk with you; and you have to tell me all about the little orphan girl."

Leonard could not resist the pleasure of talking about Helen; and he got into the carriage, which was waiting at the door for the homœopathist.

"I am going in the country a few miles to see a patient," said the doctor; "so we shall have time for undisturbed consultation. I have so often wondered what had become of you. Not hearing from Prickett, I wrote to him, and received from his heir an answer as dry as a bone. Poor fel-

low, I found that he had neglected his globules and quitted the globe. Alas, 'pulvis et umbra sumus !' I could learn no tidings of you. Prickett's successor declared he knew nothing about you. I hoped the best; for I always fancied you were one who would fall on your legs,—bilious-nervous temperament; such are the men who succeed in their undertakings, especially if they take a spoonful of *chamomilla* whenever they are over-excited. So now for your history and the little girl's,—pretty little thing,—never saw a more susceptible constitution, nor one more suited to *pulsatilla*."

Leonard briefly related his own struggles and success, and informed the good doctor how they had at last discovered the nobleman in whom poor Captain Digby had confided, and whose care of the orphan had justified the confidence.

Dr. Morgan opened his eyes at hearing the name of Lord L'Estrange. "I remember him very well," said he, "when I practised murder as an allopathist at Lansmere. But to think that wild boy, so full of whim and life and spirit, should become staid enough for a guardian to that dear little child, with her timid eyes and *pulsatilla* sensibilities. Well, wonders never cease! And he has befriended you too, you say. Ah, he knew your family."

"So he says. Do you think, sir, that he ever knew — ever saw — my mother?"

"Eh! your mother? — Nora?" exclaimed the doctor, quickly; and, as if struck by some sudden thought, his brows met, and he remained silent and musing a few moments; then, observing Leonard's eyes fixed on him earnestly, he replied to the question,—

"No doubt he saw her; she was brought up at Lady Lansmere's. Did he not tell you so?"

"No." A vague suspicion here darted through Leonard's mind, but as suddenly vanished. His father! Impossible. His father must have deliberately wronged the dead mother. And was Harley L'Estrange a man capable of such wrong? And had he been Harley's son, would not Harley have guessed it at once, and so guessing, have owned and claimed him? Besides, Lord L'Estrange looked so young,—old enough to

be Leonard's father! — he could not entertain the idea. He roused himself and said, falteringly, —

“You told me you did not know by what name I should call my father.”

“And I told you the truth, to the best of my belief.”

“By your honour, sir?”

“By my honour, I do not know it.”

There was now a long silence. The carriage had long left London, and was on a high road somewhat lonelier, and more free from houses than most of those which form the entrances to the huge city. Leonard gazed wistfully from the window, and the objects that met his eyes gradually seemed to appeal to his memory. Yes! it was the road by which he had first approached the metropolis, hand in hand with Helen — and hope so busy at his poet's heart. He sighed deeply. He thought he would willingly have resigned all he had won — independence, fame, all — to feel again the clasp of that tender hand, again to be the sole protector of that gentle life.

The doctor's voice broke on his reverie. “I am going to see a very interesting patient, — coats to his stomach quite worn out, sir, — man of great learning, with a very inflamed cerebellum. I can't do him much good, and he does me a great deal of harm.”

“How harm?” asked Leonard, with an effort at some rejoinder.

“Hits me on the heart, and makes my eyes water; very pathetic case, — grand creature, who has thrown himself away. Found him given over by the allopathists, and in a high state of *delirium tremens*, restored him for a time, took a great liking to him, — could not help it, — swallowed a great many globules to harden myself against him, would not do, brought him over to England with the other patients, who all pay me well (except Captain Higginbotham). But this poor fellow pays me nothing, — costs me a great deal in time and turnpikes, and board and lodging. Thank Heaven, I'm a single man, and can afford it! My poy, I would let all the other patients go to the allopathists if I could but save this poor, big, penniless, princely fellow. But what can one

do with a stomach that has not a rag of its coats left? Stop" (the doctor pulled the check-string). "This is the stile. I get out here and go across the fields."

That stile, those fields — with what distinctness Leonard remembered them. Ah, where was Helen? Could she ever, ever again be his child-angel?

"I will go with you, if you permit," said he to the good doctor. "And while you pay your visit, I will saunter by a little brook that I think must run by your way."

"The Brent — you know that brook? Ah, you should hear my poor patient talk of it, and of the hours he has spent angling in it, — you would not know whether to laugh or cry. The first day he was brought down to the place, he wanted to go out and try once more, he said, for his old deluding demon, — a one-eyed perch."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Leonard, "are you speaking of John Burley?"

"To be sure, that is his name, — John Burley."

"Oh, has it come to this? Cure him, save him, if it be in human power. For the last two years I have sought his trace everywhere, and in vain, the moment I had money of my own, a home of my own. Poor, erring, glorious Burley! Take me to him. Did you say there was no hope?"

"I did not say that," replied the doctor. "But art can only assist Nature; and though Nature is ever at work to repair the injuries we do to her, yet, when the coats of a stomach are all gone, she gets puzzled, and so do I. You must tell me another time how you came to know Burley, for here we are at the house, and I see him at the window looking out for me."

The doctor opened the garden gate of the quiet cottage to which poor Burley had fled from the pure presence of Leonard's child-angel. And with heavy step, and heavy heart, Leonard mournfully followed, to behold the wrecks of him whose wit had glorified orgy, and "set the table in a roar." Alas, poor Yorick!

CHAPTER V.

AUDLEY EGERTON stands on his hearth alone. During the short interval that has elapsed since we last saw him, events had occurred memorable in English history, wherewith we have nought to do in a narrative studiously avoiding all party politics even when treating of politicians. The new ministers had stated the general programme of their policy, and introduced one measure in especial that had lifted them at once to the dizzy height of popular power. But it became clear that this measure could not be carried without a fresh appeal to the people. A dissolution of parliament, as Audley's sagacious experience had foreseen, was inevitable. And Audley Egerton had no chance of return for his own seat, for the great commercial city identified with his name. Oh, sad, but not rare, instance of the mutabilities of that same popular favour now enjoyed by his successors! The great commoner, the weighty speaker, the expert man of business, the statesman who had seemed a type of the practical steady sense for which our middle class is renowned,—he who, not three years since, might have had his honoured choice of the largest popular constituencies in the kingdom,—he, Audley Egerton, knew not one single town (free from the influences of private property or interest) in which the obscurest candidate, who bawled out for the new liberal measure, would not have beaten him hollow. Where one popular hustings, on which that grave sonorous voice, that had stilled so often the roar of faction, would not be drowned amidst the hoots of the scornful mob?

True, what were called the close boroughs still existed; true, many a chief of his party would have been too proud of the honour of claiming Audley Egerton for his nominee. But the ex-minister's haughty soul shrunk from this contrast to his past position. And to fight against the popular measure,

as member of one of the seats most denounced by the people, — he felt it was a post in the grand army of parties below his dignity to occupy, and foreign to his peculiar mind, which required the sense of consequence and station. And if, in a few months, those seats were swept away — were annihilated from the rolls of parliament — where was he? Moreover, Egerton, emancipated from the trammels that had bound his will while his party was in office, desired, in the turn of events, to be nominee of no man, — desired to stand at least freely and singly on the ground of his own services, be guided by his own penetration; no law for action but his strong sense and his stout English heart. Therefore he had declined all offers from those who could still bestow seats in parliament. Seats that he could purchase with hard gold were yet open to him. And the £ 5,000 he had borrowed from Levy were yet untouched.

To this lone public man, public life, as we have seen, was the all in all. But now more than ever it was vital to his very wants. Around him yawned ruin. He knew that it was in Levy's power at any moment to foreclose on his mortgaged lands; to pour in the bonds and the bills which lay within those rosewood receptacles that lined the fatal lair of the sleek usurer; to seize on the very house in which now moved all the pomp of a retinue that vied with the *valetaille* of dukes; to advertise for public auction, under execution, "the costly effects of the Right Hon. Audley Egerton." But, consummate in his knowledge of the world, Egerton felt assured that Levy would not adopt these measures against him while he could still tower in the van of political war, — while he could still see before him the full chance of restoration to power, perhaps to power still higher than before, perhaps to power the highest of all beneath the throne. That Levy, whose hate he divined, though he did not conjecture all its causes, had hitherto delayed even a visit, even a menace, seemed to him to show that Levy still thought him one "to be helped," or, at least, one too powerful to crush. To secure his position in parliament unshackled, unfallen, if but for another year, — new combinations of party might arise, new

reactions take place, in public opinion! And, with his hand pressed to his heart, the stern firm man muttered, "If not, I ask but to die in my harness, and that men may not know that I am a pauper until all that I need from my country is a grave."

Scarcely had these words died upon his lips ere two quick knocks in succession resounded at the street door. In another moment Harley entered, and, at the same time, the servant in attendance approached Audley, and announced Baron Levy.

"Beg the baron to wait, unless he would prefer to name his own hour to call again," answered Egerton, with the slightest possible change of colour. "You can say I am now with Lord L'Estrange."

"I had hoped you had done forever with that deluder of youth," said Harley, as soon as the groom of the chambers had withdrawn. "I remember that you saw too much of him in the gay time, ere wild oats are sown; but now surely you can never need a loan; and if so is not Harley L'Estrange by your side?"

EGERTON. — "My dear Harley! doubtless he but comes to talk to me of some borough. He has much to do with those delicate negotiations."

HARLEY. — "And I have come on the same business. I claim the priority. I not only hear in the world, but I see by the papers, that Josiah Jenkins, Esq., known to fame as an orator who leaves out his h's, and young Lord Willoughby Whiggolin, who is just made a Lord of the Admiralty, because his health is too delicate for the army, are certain to come in for the city which you and your present colleague will as certainly vacate. That is true, is it not?"

EGERTON. — "My old Committee now vote for Jenkins and Whiggolin; and I suppose there will not be even a contest. Go on."

"So my father and I are agreed that you must condescend, for the sake of old friendship, to be once more member for Lansmere."

"Harley," exclaimed Egerton, changing countenance far

more than he had done at the announcement of Levy's portentous visit, "Harley, no, no!"

"No! But why? Wherefore such emotion?" asked L'Estrange, in surprise.

Audley was silent.

HARLEY. — "I suggested the idea to two or three of the late ministers; they all concur in advising you to accede. In the first place, if declining to stand for the place which tempted you from Lansmere, what more natural than that you should fall back on that earlier representation? In the second place, Lansmere is neither a rotten borough to be bought, nor a close borough, under one man's nomination. It is a tolerably large constituency. My father, it is true, has considerable interest in it, but only what is called the legitimate influence of property. At all events, it is more secure than a contest for a larger town, more dignified than a seat for a smaller. Hesitating still? Even my mother entreats me to say how she desires you to renew that connection."

"Harley," again exclaimed Egerton; and fixing upon his friend's earnest face eyes which, when softened by emotion, were strangely beautiful in their expression, — "Harley, if you could but read my heart at this moment, you would — you would —" His voice faltered, and he fairly bent his proud head upon Harley's shoulder; grasping the hand he had caught nervously, clingly, "Oh, Harley, if I ever lose your love, your friendship, nothing else is left to me in the world."

"Audley, my dear, dear Audley, is it you who speak to me thus? You, my school friend, my life's confidant, — you?"

"I am grown very weak and foolish," said Egerton, trying to smile. "I do not know myself. I, too, whom you have so often called 'Stoic,' and likened to the Iron Man in the poem which you used to read by the riverside at Eton."

"But even then, my Audley, I knew that a warm human heart (do what you would to keep it down) beat strong under the iron ribs. And I often marvel now, to think you have gone through life so free from the wilder passions. Happier so!"

Egerton, who had turned his face from his friend's gaze, remained silent for a few moments; and he then sought to divert the conversation, and roused himself to ask Harley how he had succeeded in his views upon Beatrice, and his watch on the count.

"With regard to Peschiera," answered Harley, "I think we must have overrated the danger we apprehended, and that his wagers were but an idle boast. He has remained quiet enough, and seems devoted to play. His sister has shut her doors both on myself and my young associate during the last few days. I almost fear that in spite of very sage warnings of mine, she must have turned his poet's head, and that either he has met with some scornful rebuff to incautious admiration or that, he himself has grown aware of peril, and declines to face it; for he is very much embarrassed when I speak to him respecting her. But if the count is not formidable, why, his sister is not needed; and I hope yet to get justice for my Italian friend through the ordinary channels. I have secured an ally in a young Austrian prince, who is now in London, and who has promised to back, with all his influence, a memorial I shall transmit to Vienna. *À propos*, my dear Audley, now that you have a little breathing-time, you must fix an hour for me to present to you my young poet, the son of *her* sister. At moments the expression of his face is so like hers."

"Ay, ay," answered Egerton, quickly, "I will see him as you wish, but later. I have not yet that breathing-time you speak of; but you say he has prospered; and, with your friendship, he is secure from fortune. I rejoice to think so."

"And your own *protégé*, this Randal Leslie, whom you forbid me to dislike — hard task! — what has he decided?"

"To adhere to my fate. Harley, if it please Heaven that I do not live to return to power, and provide adequately for that young man, do not forget that he clung to me in my fall."

"If he still cling to you faithfully, I will never forget it. I will forget only all that now makes me doubt him. But *you* talk of not living, Audley! Pooh! your frame is that of a predestined octogenarian."

"Nay," answered Audley, "I was but uttering one of those vague generalities which are common upon all mortal lips. And now farewell,—I must see this baron."

"Not yet, until you have promised to consent to my proposal, and be once more member for Lansmere. Tut! don't shake your head. I cannot be denied. I claim your promise in right of our friendship, and shall be seriously hurt if you even pause to reflect on it."

"Well, well, I know not how to refuse you, Harley; but you have not been to Lansmere yourself since — since that sad event. You must not revive the old wound, — *you* must not go; and — and, I own it, Harley, the remembrance of it pains even me. I would rather not go to Lansmere."

"Ah, my friend, this is an excess of sympathy, and I cannot listen to it. I begin even to blame my own weakness, and to feel that we have no right to make ourselves the soft slaves of the past."

"You do appear to me of late to have changed," cried Egerton, suddenly, and with a brightening aspect. "Do tell me that you are happy in the contemplation of your new ties, — that I shall live to see you once more restored to your former self."

"All I can answer, Audley," said L'Estrange, with a thoughtful brow, "is, that you are right in one thing, — I am changed; and I am struggling to gain strength for duty and for honour. Adieu! I shall tell my father that you accede to our wishes."

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Harley was gone, Egerton sunk back on his chair, as if in extreme physical or mental exhaustion, all the lines of his countenance relaxed and jaded.

"To go back to that place — there — there — where — Courage, courage! what is another pang?"

He rose with an effort, and folding his arms tightly across his breast, paced slowly to and fro the large, mournful, solitary room. Gradually his countenance assumed its usual cold and austere composure,—the secret eye, the guarded lip, the haughty, collected front. The man of the world was himself once more.

“Now to gain time, and to baffle the usurer,” murmured Egerton, with that low tone of easy scorn, which bespoke consciousness of superior power and the familiar mastery over hostile natures. He rang the bell: the servant entered.

“Is Baron Levy still waiting?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Admit him.”

Levy entered.

“I beg your pardon, Levy,” said the ex-minister, “for having so long detained you. I am now at your commands.”

“My dear fellow,” returned the baron, “no apologies between friends so old as we are; and I fear that my business is not so agreeable as to make you impatient to discuss it.”

EGERTON (with perfect composure). — “I am to conclude, then, that you wish to bring our accounts to a close. Whenever you will, Levy.”

The BARON (disconcerted and surprised). — “*Peste! mon cher*, you take things coolly. But if our accounts are closed, I fear you will have but little to live upon.”

EGERTON. — “I can continue to live on the salary of a Cabinet Minister.”

BARON. — “Possibly; but you are no longer a Cabinet Minister.”

EGERTON. — “You have never found me deceived in a political prediction. Within twelve months (should life be spared to me) I shall be in office again. If the same to you, I would rather wait till then formally and amicably to resign to you my lands and this house. If you grant that reprieve, our connection can thus close without the *éclat* and noise which may be invidious to you, as it would be disagreeable to me. But if that delay be inconvenient, I will appoint a lawyer to examine your accounts, and adjust my liabilities.”

The BARON (soliloquizing). — "I don't like this. A lawyer! That may be awkward."

EGERTON (observing the baron, with a curl on his lip). — "Well, Levy, how shall it be?"

The BARON. — "You know, my dear fellow, it is not my character to be hard on any one, least of all upon an old friend. And if you really think there is a chance of your return to office, which you apprehend that an *esclandre* as to your affairs at present might damage, why, let us see if we can conciliate matters. But, first, *mon cher*, in order to become a minister, you must at least have a seat in parliament; and pardon me the question, how the deuce are you to find one?"

EGERTON. — "It is found."

The BARON. — "Ah, I forgot the £5,000 you last borrowed."

EGERTON. — "No; I reserve that sum for another purpose."

The BARON (with a forced laugh). — "Perhaps to defend yourself against the actions you apprehend from me?"

EGERTON. — "You are mistaken. But to soothe your suspicions I will tell you plainly, that finding any sum I might have insured on my life would be liable to debts preincurred, and (as you will be my sole creditor) might thus at my death pass back to you; and doubting whether, indeed, any office would accept my insurance, I appropriate that sum to the relief of my conscience. I intend to bestow it, while yet in life, upon my late wife's kinsman, Randal Leslie. And it is solely the wish to do what I consider an act of justice, that has prevailed with me to accept a favour from the hands of Harley L'Estrange, and to become again the member for Lansmere."

The BARON. — "Ha! — Lansmere! You will stand for Lansmere?"

EGERTON (wincing). — "I propose to do so."

The BARON. — "I believe you will be opposed, subjected to even a sharp contest. Perhaps you may lose your election."

EGERTON. — "If so, I resign myself, and you can foreclose on my estates."

THE BARON (his brow clearing). — "Look you, Egerton, I shall be too happy to do you a favour."

EGERTON (with stateliness). — "Favour! No, Baron Levy, I ask from you no favour. Dismiss all thought of rendering me one. It is but a consideration of business on both sides. If you think it better that we shall at once settle our accounts, my lawyer shall investigate them. If you agree to the delay I request, my lawyer shall give you no trouble; and all that I have, except hope and character, pass to your hands without a struggle."

THE BARON. — "Inflexible and ungracious, favour or not — put it as you will — I accede, provided, first, that you allow me to draw up a fresh deed, which will accomplish your part of the compact; and secondly, that we saddle the proposed delay with the condition that you do not lose your election."

EGERTON. — "Agreed. Have you anything further to say?"

THE BARON. — "Nothing, except that, if you require more money, I am still at your service."

EGERTON. — "I thank you. No; I shall take the occasion of my retirement from office to reduce my establishment. I have calculated already, and provided for the expenditure I need, up to the date I have specified, and I shall have no occasion to touch the £ 5,000 that I still retain."

"Your young friend, Mr. Leslie, ought to be very grateful to you," said the baron, rising. "I have met him in the world, — a lad of much promise and talent. You should try and get him also into parliament."

EGERTON (thoughtfully). — "You are a good judge of the practical abilities and merits of men, as regards worldly success. Do you really think Randal Leslie calculated for public life — for a parliamentary career?"

THE BARON. — "Indeed I do."

EGERTON (speaking more to himself than Levy). — "Parliament without fortune, — 't is a sharp trial; still he is prudent, abstemious, energetic, persevering; and at the onset, under my auspices and advice, he might establish a position beyond his years."

THE BARON. — "It strikes me that we might possibly get him into the next parliament; or, as that is not likely to last long, at all events, into the parliament to follow,— not for one of the boroughs which will be swept away, but for a permanent seat, and without expense."

EGERTON. — "Ay,— and how?"

THE BARON. — "Give me a few days to consider. An idea has occurred to me. I will call again if I find it practicable. Good-day to you, Egerton, and success to your election for Lansmere."

CHAPTER VII.

PESCHIERA had not been so inactive as he had appeared to Harley and the reader. On the contrary, he had prepared the way for his ultimate design, with all the craft and the unscrupulous resolution which belonged to his nature. His object was to compel Riccabocca into assenting to the count's marriage with Violante, or, failing that, to ruin all chance of his kinsman's restoration. Quietly and secretly he had sought out, amongst the most needy and unprincipled of his own countrymen, those whom he could suborn to depose to Riccabocca's participation in plots and conspiracies against the Austrian dominion. These his former connection with the Carbonari enabled him to track to their refuge in London; and his knowledge of the characters he had to deal with fitted him well for the villanous task he undertook. He had, therefore, already selected out of these desperadoes a sufficient number either to serve as witnesses against his kinsman, or to aid him in any more audacious scheme which circumstance might suggest to his adoption. Meanwhile, he had (as Harley had suspected he would) set spies upon Randal's movements; and the day before that young traitor confided to him Violante's retreat, he had at least got scent of her father's.

The discovery that Violante was under a roof so honoured, and seemingly so safe, as Lord Lansmere's, did not discourage this bold and desperate adventurer. We have seen him set forth to reconnoitre the house at Knightsbridge. He had examined it well, and discovered the quarter which he judged favourable to a *coup-de-main*, should that become necessary.

Lord Lansmere's house and grounds were surrounded by a wall, the entrance being to the high-road, and by a porter's lodge. At the rear there lay fields crossed by a lane or by-road. To these fields a small door in the wall, which was used by the gardeners in passing to and from their work, gave communication. This door was usually kept locked; but the lock was of the rude and simple description common to such entrances, and easily opened by a skeleton key. So far there was no obstacle which Peschiera's experience in conspiracy and gallantry did not disdain as trivial. But the count was not disposed to abrupt and violent means in the first instance. He had a confidence in his personal gifts, in his address, in his previous triumphs over the sex, which made him naturally desire to hazard the effect of a personal interview; and on this he resolved with his wonted audacity. Randal's description of Violante's personal appearance, and such suggestions as to her character and the motives most likely to influence her actions as that young lynx-eyed observer could bestow, were all that the count required of present aid from his accomplice.

Meanwhile we return to Violante herself. We see her now seated in the gardens at Knightsbridge, side by side with Helen. The place was retired, and out of sight from the windows of the house.

VIOLANTE. — "But why will you not tell me more of that early time? You are less communicative even than Leonard."

HELEN (looking down, and hesitatingly). — "Indeed there is nothing to tell you that you do not know; and it is so long since, and things are so changed now."

The tone of the last words was mournful, and the words ended with a sigh.

VIOLANTE (with enthusiasm). — "How I envy you that past

which you treat so lightly ! To have been something, even in childhood, to the formation of a noble nature ; to have borne on those slight shoulders half the load of a man's grand labour ; and now to see Genius moving calm in its clear career ; and to say inly, 'Of that genius I am a part !' "

HELEN (sadly and humbly). — "A part ! Oh, no ! A part ? I don't understand you."

VIOLANTE. — "Take the child Beatrice from Dante's life, and should we have a Dante ? What is a poet's genius but the voice of its emotions ? All things in life and in Nature influence genius ; but what influences it the most are its own sorrows and affections."

Helen looks softly into Violante's eloquent face, and draws nearer to her in tender silence.

VIOLANTE (suddenly). — "Yes, Helen, yes,—I know by my own heart how to read yours. Such memories are ineffaceable. Few guess what strange self-weavers of our own destinies we women are in our veriest childhood !" She sunk her voice into a whisper : "How could Leonard fail to be dear to you,—dear as you to him,—dearer than all others ?"

HELEN (shrinking back, and greatly disturbed). — "Hush, hush ! you must not speak to me thus ; it is wicked,—I cannot bear it. I would not have it be so ; it must not be,—it cannot !"

She clasped her hands over her eyes for a moment, and then lifted her face, and the face was very sad, but very calm.

VIOLANTE (twining her arm round Helen's waist). — "How have I wounded you,—how offended ? Forgive me, but why is this wicked ? Why must it not be ? Is it because he is below you in birth ?"

HELEN. — "No, no, — I never thought of that. And what am I ? Don't ask me,—I cannot answer. You are wrong, quite wrong as to me. I can only look on Leonard as — as a brother. But — but, you can speak to him more freely than I can. I would not have him waste his heart on me, nor yet think me unkind and distant, as I seem. I know not what I say. But — but — break to him — indirectly — gently — that

duty in both forbids us both to — to be more than friends — than — ”

“Helen, Helen!” cried Violante, in her warm, generous passion, “your heart betrays you in every word you say. You weep; lean on me, whisper to me; why — why is this? Do you fear that your guardian would not consent? He not consent? He who — ”

HELEN. — “Cease — cease — cease!”

VIOLANTE. — “What! You can fear Harley — Lord L’Estrange? Fie; you do not know him.”

HELEN (rising suddenly). — “Violante, hold; I am engaged to another.”

Violante rose also, and stood still, as if turned to stone; pale as death, till the blood came, at first slowly, then with suddenness from her heart, and one deep glow suffused her whole countenance. She caught Helen’s hand firmly, and said in a hollow voice, —

“Another! Engaged to another! One word, Helen, — not to him — not to — Harley — to — ”

“I cannot say, — I must not. I have promised,” cried poor Helen, and as Violante let fall her hand, she hurried away.

Violante sat down mechanically; she felt as if stunned by a mortal blow. She closed her eyes and breathed hard. A deadly faintness seized her; and when it passed away, it seemed to her as if she were no longer the same being, nor the world around her the same world, — as if she were but one sense of intense, hopeless misery, and as if the universe were but one inanimate void. So strangely immaterial are we really — we human beings, with flesh and blood — that if you suddenly abstract from us but single, impalpable, airy thought, which our souls have cherished, you seem to curdle the air, to extinguish the sun, to snap every link that connects us to matter, and to benumb everything into death, except woe.

And this warm, young, southern nature but a moment before was so full of joy and life, and vigorous, lofty hope. It never till now had known its own intensity and depth. The virgin had never lifted the veil from her own soul of woman.

What, till then, had Harley L'Estrange been to Violante? An ideal, a dream of some imagined excellence, a type of poetry in the midst of the common world. It had not been Harley the man, — it had been Harley the Phantom. She had never said to herself, "He is identified with my love, my hopes, my home, my future." How could she? Of such he himself had never spoken; an internal voice, indeed, had vaguely, yet irresistibly, whispered to her that, despite his light words, his feelings towards her were grave and deep. O false voice! how it had deceived her! Her quick convictions seized the all that Helen had left unsaid. And now suddenly she felt what it is to love, and what it is to despair. So she sat, crushed and solitary, neither murmuring nor weeping, only now and then passing her hand across her brow, as if to clear away some cloud that would not be dispersed; or heaving a deep sigh, as if to throw off some load that no time henceforth could remove. There are certain moments in life in which we say to ourselves, "All is over; no matter what else changes, that which I have made my all is gone evermore — evermore!" And our own thought rings back in our ears, "Evermore — evermore!"

CHAPTER VIII.

As Violante thus sat, a stranger, passing stealthily through the trees, stood between herself and the evening sun. She saw him not. He paused a moment, and then spoke low, in her native tongue, addressing her by the name which she had borne in Italy. He spoke as a relation, and excused his intrusion: "For," said he, "I come to suggest to the daughter the means by which she can restore to her father his country and his honours."

At the word "father" Violante roused herself, and all her love for that father rushed back upon her with double force. It does so ever, — we love most our parents at the moment

when some tie less holy is abruptly broken; and when the conscience says, "*There*, at least, is a love that has never deceived thee!"

She saw before her a man of mild aspect and princely form. Peschiera (for it was he) had banished from his dress, as from his countenance, all that betrayed the worldly levity of his character. He was acting a part, and he dressed and looked it.

"My father!" she said, quickly, and in Italian. "What of him? And who are you, signor? I know you not."

Peschiera smiled benignly, and replied in a tone in which great respect was softened by a kind of parental tenderness, —

"Suffer me to explain, and listen to me while I speak." Then, quietly seating himself on the bench beside her, he looked into her eyes, and resumed, —

"Doubtless you have heard of the Count di Peschiera?"

VIOLANTE. — "I heard that name, as a child, when in Italy. And when she with whom I then dwelt (my father's aunt) fell ill and died, I was told that my home in Italy was gone, that it had passed to the Count di Peschiera, — my father's foe!"

PESCHIERA. — "And your father, since then, has taught you to hate this fancied foe?"

VIOLANTE. — "Nay, my father did but forbid me ever to breathe his name."

PESCHIERA. — "Alas! what years of suffering and exile might have been saved your father, had he but been more just to his early friend and kinsman, — nay, had he but less cruelly concealed the secret of his retreat. Fair child, I am that Giulio Franzini, that Count di Peschiera. I am the man you have been told to regard as your father's foe. I am the man on whom the Austrian Emperor bestowed his lands. And now judge if I am, in truth, the foe. I have come hither to seek your father, in order to dispossess myself of my sovereign's gift. I have come but with one desire, — to restore Alphonso to his native land, and to surrender the heritage that was forced upon me."

VIOLANTE. — "My father, my dear father! His grand heart will have room once more. Oh, this is noble enmity,

true revenge! I understand it, signor, and so will my father, for such would have been his revenge on you. You have seen him?"

PESCHIERA. — "No, not yet. I would not see him till I had seen yourself; for you, in truth, are the arbiter of his destinies, as of mine."

VIOLANTE. — "I, Count? I — arbiter of my father's destinies? Is it possible?"

PESCHIERA (with a look of compassionate admiration, and in a tone yet more emphatically parental). — "How lovely is that innocent joy! But do not indulge it yet. Perhaps it is a sacrifice which is asked from you, — a sacrifice too hard to bear. Do not interrupt me. Listen still, and you will see why I could not speak to your father until I had obtained an interview with yourself. See why a word from you may continue still to banish me from his presence. You know, doubtless, that your father was one of the chiefs of a party that sought to free Northern Italy from the Austrians. I myself was at the onset a warm participator in that scheme. In a sudden moment I discovered that some of its more active projectors had coupled with a patriotic enterprise plots of a dark nature, and that the conspiracy itself was about to be betrayed to the government. I wished to consult with your father; but he was at a distance. I learned that his life was condemned. Not an hour was to be lost. I took a bold resolve, that has exposed me to his suspicions and to my country's wrath. But my main idea was to save him, my early friend, from death, and my country from fruitless massacre. I withdrew from the intended revolt. I sought at once the head of the Austrian government in Italy, and made terms for the lives of Alphonso and of the other more illustrious chiefs, which otherwise would have been forfeited. I obtained permission to undertake myself the charge of securing my kinsman in order to place him in safety, and to conduct him to a foreign land, in an exile that would cease when the danger was dispelled. But unhappily he deemed that I only sought to destroy him. He fled from my friendly pursuit. The soldiers with me were attacked by an intermeddling English-

man; your father escaped from Italy, concealing his retreat; and the character of his flight counteracted my efforts to obtain his pardon. The government conferred on me half his revenues, holding the other half at its pleasure. I accepted the offer in order to save his whole heritage from confiscation. That I did not convey to him what I pined to do, — namely, the information that I held but in trust what was bestowed by the government, and the full explanation of what seemed blamable in my conduct, — was necessarily owing to the secrecy he maintained. I could not discover his refuge; but I never ceased to plead for his recall. This year only I have partially succeeded. He can be restored to his heritage and rank, on one proviso, — a guarantee for his loyalty. That guarantee the government has named: it is the alliance of his only child with one whom the government can trust. It was the interest of all the Italian nobility that the representation of a House so great falling to a female should not pass away wholly from the direct line, — in a word, that you should ally yourself with a kinsman. But one kinsman, and he the next in blood, presented himself. In short, Alphonso regains all that he lost on the day in which his daughter gives her hand to Giulio Franzini, Count di Peschiera. Ah," continued the count, mournfully, "you shriek, you recoil. He thus submitted to your choice is indeed unworthy of you. You are scarce in the spring of life, he is in its waning autumn. Youth loves youth. He does not aspire to your love. All that he can say is, love is not the only joy of the heart, — it is joy to raise from ruin a beloved father; joy to restore, to a land poor in all but memories, a chief in whom it reverences a line of heroes. These are the joys I offer to you, — you, a daughter, and an Italian maid. Still silent? Oh, speak to me!"

Certainly this Count Peschiera knew well how woman is to be wooed and won; and never was woman more sensitive to those high appeals which most move all true earnest womanhood than was the young Violante. Fortune favoured him in the moment chosen. Harley was wrenched away from her hopes, and love a word erased from her language. In the void

of the world, her father's image alone stood clear and visible. And she who from infancy had so pined to serve that father, who at first learned to dream of Harley as that father's friend! She could restore to him all for which the exile sighed; and by a sacrifice of self,—self-sacrifice, ever in itself such a temptation to the noble! Still, in the midst of the confusion and disturbance of her mind, the idea of marriage with another seemed so terrible and revolting, that she could not at once conceive it; and still that instinct of openness and honour, which pervaded all her character, warned even her inexperience that there was something wrong in this clandestine appeal to herself.

Again the count besought her to speak, and with an effort she said, irresolutely,—

“If it be as you say, it is not for me to answer you; it is for my father.”

“Nay,” replied Peschiera. “Pardon, if I contradict you. Do you know so little of your father as to suppose that he will suffer his interest to dictate to his pride? He would refuse, perhaps, even to receive my visit, to hear my explanations; but certainly he would refuse to buy back his inheritance by the sacrifice of his daughter to one whom he has deemed his foe, and whom the mere disparity of years would incline the world to say he had made the barter of his personal ambition. But if I could go to him sanctioned by you; if I could say, ‘Your daughter overlooks what the father might deem an obstacle,—she has consented to accept my hand of her own free choice, she unites her happiness, and blends her prayers with mine,’—then, indeed, I could not fail of success; and Italy would pardon my errors, and bless your name. Ah, Signorina, do not think of me save as an instrument towards the fulfilment of duties so high and sacred! think but of your ancestors, your father, your native land, and reject not the proud occasion to prove how you revere them all!”

Violante's heart was touched at the right chord. Her head rose, the colour came back to her pale cheek, she turned the glorious beauty of her countenance towards the wily tempter. She was about to answer and to seal her fate, when at that

instant Harley's voice was heard at a little distance, and Nero came bounding towards her, and thrust himself, with rough familiarity, between her and Peschiera. The count drew back, and Violante, whose eyes were still fixed on his face, started at the change that passed there. One quick gleam of rage sufficed in an instant to light up the sinister secrets of his nature,—it was the face of the baffled gladiator. He had time but for few words.

"I must not be seen here," he muttered; "but to-morrow, in these gardens, about this hour. I implore you, for the sake of your father,—his hopes, fortunes, his very life,—to guard the secret of this interview,—to meet me again. Adieu!"

He vanished amidst the trees, and was gone,—noiselessly, mysteriously, as he had come.

CHAPTER IX.

THE last words of Peschiera were still ringing in Violante's ears when Harley appeared in sight, and the sound of his voice dispelled the vague and dreamy stupor which had crept over her senses. At that voice there returned the consciousness of a mighty loss, the sting of an intolerable anguish. To meet Harley there, and thus, seemed impossible. She turned abruptly away, and hurried towards the house. Harley called to her by name, but she would not answer, and only quickened her steps. He paused a moment in surprise, and then hastened after her.

"Under what strange taboo am I placed?" said he, gayly, as he laid his hand on her shrinking arm. "I inquire for Helen,—she is ill, and cannot see me. I come to sun myself in your presence, and you fly me as if gods and men had set their mark on my brow. Child! child! what is this? You are weeping?"

"Do not stay me now,—do not speak to me," answered Violante, through her stifling sobs, as she broke from his hand and made towards the house.

"Have you a grief, and under the shelter of my father's roof, — a grief that you will not tell to me? Cruel!" cried Harley, with inexpressible tenderness of reproach in his soft tones.

Violante could not trust herself to reply. Ashamed of her self-betrayal, softened yet more by his pleading voice, she could have prayed to the earth to swallow her. At length, checking her tears by an heroic effort, she said, almost calmly, "Noble friend, forgive me. I have no grief, believe me, which — which I can tell to you. I was but thinking of my poor father when you came up; alarming myself about him, it may be, with vain, superstitious fears; and so — even a slight surprise — your abrupt appearance has sufficed to make me thus weak and foolish; but I wish to see my father! — to go home — home!"

"Your father is well, believe me, and pleased that you are here. No danger threatens him; and you, *here*, are safe."

"I safe — and from what?"

Harley mused irresolute. He inclined to confide to her the danger which her father had concealed; but had he the right to do so against her father's will?

"Give me," he said, "time to reflect, and to obtain permission to intrust you with a secret which, in my judgment, you should know. Meanwhile, this much I may say, that rather than you should incur the danger that I believe he exaggerates, your father would have given you a protector — even in Randal Leslie."

Violante started.

"But," resumed Harley, with a calm, in which a certain deep mournfulness was apparent, unconsciously to himself — "but I trust you are reserved for a fairer fate, and a nobler spouse. I have vowed to live henceforth in the common workday world. But for you, bright child, for you, I am a dreamer still!"

Violante turned her eyes for one instant towards the melancholy speaker. The look thrilled to his heart. He bowed his face involuntarily. When he looked up, she had left his side. He did not this time attempt to follow her, but moved away and plunged amidst the leafless trees.

An hour afterwards he re-entered the house, and again sought to see Helen. She had now recovered sufficiently to give him the interview he requested.

He approached her with a grave and serious gentleness.

"My dear Helen," said he, "you have consented to be my wife, my life's mild companion; let it be soon — soon — for I need you. I need all the strength of that holy tie. Helen, let me press you to fix the time."

"I owe you too much," answered Helen, looking down, "to have any will but yours. But your mother," she added; perhaps clinging to the idea of some reprieve, — "your mother has not yet —"

"My mother — true. I will speak first to her. You shall receive from my family all honour due to your gentle virtues. Helen, by the way, have you mentioned to Violante the bond between us?"

"No; that is, I fear I may have unguardedly betrayed it, against Lady Lansmere's commands too — but — but —"

"So, Lady Lansmere forbade you to name it to Violante? This should not be. I will answer for her permission to revoke that interdict. It is due to Violante and to you. Tell your young friend all. Ah, Helen, if I am at times cold or wayward, bear with me — bear with me; for you love me, do you not?"

CHAPTER X.

THAT same evening Randal heard from Levy (at whose house he stayed late) of that self-introduction to Violante which (thanks to his skeleton key) Peschiera had contrived to effect; and the count seemed more than sanguine,— he seemed assured as to the full and speedy success of his matrimonial enterprise. "Therefore," said Levy, "I trust I may very soon congratulate you on the acquisition of your family estates."

"Strange!" answered Randal, "strange that my fortunes seem so bound up with the fate of a foreigner like Beatrice di Negra and her connection with Frank Hazeldean." He looked up at the clock as he spoke, and added,—

"Frank by this time has told his father of his engagement."

"And you feel sure that the squire cannot be coaxed into consent?"

"No; but I feel sure that the squire will be so choleric at the first intelligence, that Frank will not have the self-control necessary for coaxing; and, perhaps, before the squire can relent upon this point, he may, by some accident, learn his grievances on another, which would exasperate him still more."

"Ay, I understand,—the post-obit?"

Randal nodded.

"And what then?" asked Levy.

"The next of kin to the lands of Hazeldean may have his day."

The baron smiled.

"You have good prospects in that direction, Leslie; look now to another. I spoke to you of the borough of Lansmere. Your patron, Audley Egerton, intends to stand for it."

Randal's heart had of late been so set upon other and more avaricious schemes, that a seat in parliament had sunk into a secondary object; nevertheless his ambitious and all-grasping nature felt a bitter pang, when he heard that Egerton thus interposed between himself and any chance of advancement.

"So," he muttered sullenly,— "so this man, who pretends to be my benefactor, squanders away the wealth of my forefathers, throws me penniless on the world; and, while still encouraging me to exertion and public life, robs me himself of —"

"No!" interrupted Levy, "not robs you; we may prevent that. The Lansmere interest is not so strong in the borough as Dick Avenel's."

"But I cannot stand against Egerton."

"Assuredly not,—you may stand with him."

"How?"

"Dick Avenel will never suffer Egerton to come in; and though he cannot, perhaps, carry two of his own politics, he can split his votes upon you."

Randal's eyes flashed. He saw at a glance that if Avenel did not overrate the relative strength of parties, his seat could be secured.

"But," he said, "Egerton has not spoken to me on such a subject; nor can you expect that he would propose to me to stand with him, if he foresaw the chance of being ousted by the very candidate he himself introduced."

"Neither he nor his party will anticipate that possibility. If he ask you, agree to stand,—leave the rest to me."

"You must hate Egerton bitterly," said Randal; "for I am not vain enough to think that you thus scheme but from pure love to me."

"The motives of men are intricate and complicated," answered Levy, with unusual seriousness. "It suffices to the wise to profit by the actions, and leave the motives in shade."

There was silence for some minutes. Then the two drew closer towards each other, and began to discuss details in their joint designs.

Randal walked home slowly. It was a cold moonlit night. Young idlers of his own years and rank passed him by on their way from the haunts of social pleasure. They were yet in the first fair holiday of life. Life's holiday had gone from him forever. Graver men, in the various callings of masculine labour — professions, trade, the State — passed him also. Their steps might be sober, and their faces careworn; but no step had the furtive stealth of his, no face the same contracted, sinister, suspicious gloom. Only once, in a lonely thoroughfare, and on the opposite side of the way, fell a foot-fall, and glanced an eye, that seemed to betray a soul in sympathy with Randal Leslie's.

And Randal, who had heeded none of the other passengers by the way, as if instinctively, took note of this one. His nerves crisped at the noiseless slide of that form, as it stalked on from lamp to lamp, keeping pace with his own. He felt a sort of awe, as if he had beheld the wraith of himself; and

ever as he glanced suspiciously at the stranger, the stranger glanced at him. He was inexpressibly relieved when the figure turned down another street and vanished.

That man was a felon, as yet undetected. Between him and his kind there stood but a thought,—a veil air-spun, but impassable, as the veil of the Image at Sais.

And thus moved and thus looked Randal Leslie, a thing of dark and secret mischief, within the pale of the law, but equally removed from man by the vague consciousness that at his heart lay that which the eyes of man would abhor and loathe. Solitary amidst the vast city, and on through the machinery of Civilization, went the still spirit of Intellectual Evil.

CHAPTER XI.

EARLY the next morning Randal received two notes, one from Frank, written in great agitation, begging Randal to see and propitiate his father, whom he feared he had grievously offended; and then running off, rather incoherently, into protestations that his honour as well as his affections were engaged irrevocably to Beatrice, and that her, at least, he could never abandon.

And the second note was from the squire himself—short, and far less cordial than usual—requesting Mr. Leslie to call on him.

Randal dressed in haste, and went first to Limmer's hotel.

He found the parson with Mr. Hazeldean, and endeavouring in vain to soothe him. The squire had not slept all night, and his appearance was almost haggard.

"Oho! Mr. young Leslie," said he, throwing himself back in his chair as Randal entered, "I thought you were a friend,—I thought you were Frank's adviser. Explain, sir! explain!"

"Gently, my dear Mr. Hazeldean," said the parson. "You do but surprise and alarm Mr. Leslie. Tell him more distinctly what he has to explain."

SQUIRE. — "Did you or did you not tell me or Mrs. Hazeldean that Frank was in love with Violante Rickeybockey?"

RANDAL (as in amaze). — "I! Never, sir! I feared, on the contrary, that he was somewhat enamoured of a very different person. I hinted at that possibility. I could not do more, for I did not know how far Frank's affections were seriously engaged. And indeed, sir, Mrs. Hazeldean, though not encouraging the idea that your son could marry a foreigner and a Roman Catholic, did not appear to consider such objections insuperable, if Frank's happiness were really at stake."

Here the poor squire gave way to a burst of passion, that involved in one tempest Frank, Randal, Harry herself, and the whole race of foreigners, Roman Catholics, and women. While the squire was still incapable of hearing reason, the parson, taking aside Randal, convinced himself that the whole affair, so far as Randal was concerned, had its origin in a very natural mistake; and that while that young gentleman had been hinting at Beatrice, Mrs. Hazeldean had been thinking of Violante. With considerable difficulty he succeeded in conveying this explanation to the squire, and somewhat appeasing his wrath against Randal. And the Dissimulator, seizing his occasion, then expressed so much grief and astonishment at learning that matters had gone as far as the parson informed him, — that Frank had actually proposed to Beatrice, been accepted, and engaged himself, before even communicating with his father; he declared so earnestly, that he could never conjecture such evil, that he had had Frank's positive promise to take no step without the sanction of his parents; he professed such sympathy with the squire's wounded feelings, and such regret at Frank's involvement, that Mr. Hazeldean at last yielded up his honest heart to his consoler, and griping Randal's hand, said, "Well, well, I wronged you; beg your pardon. What now is to be done?"

"Why, you cannot consent to this marriage, — impossible!"

replied Randal; "and we must hope, therefore, to influence Frank by his sense of duty."

"That's it," said the squire; "for I'll not give way. Pretty pass things have come to, indeed! A widow, too, I hear. Artful jade! thought, no doubt, to catch a Hazeldean of Hazeldean. My estates go to an outlandish Papistical set of mongrel brats! No, no, never!"

"But," said the parson, mildly, "perhaps we may be unjustly prejudiced against this lady. We should have consented to Violante; why not to her? She is of good family?"

"Certainly," said Randal.

"And good character?"

Randal shook his head, and sighed. The squire caught him roughly by the arm — "Answer the parson!" cried he, vehemently.

"Indeed, sir, I cannot speak disrespectfully of the character of a woman,— who may, too, become Frank's wife; and the world is ill-natured and not to be believed. But you can judge for yourself, my dear Mr. Hazeldean. Ask your brother whether Madame di Negra is one whom he would advise his nephew to marry."

"My brother!" exclaimed the squire, furiously. "Consult my distant brother on the affairs of my own son?"

"He is a man of the world," put in Randal.

"And of feeling and honour," said the parson; "and, perhaps, through him, we may be enabled to enlighten Frank, and save him from what appears to be the snare of an artful woman."

"Meanwhile," said Randal, "I will seek Frank, and do my best with him. Let me go now,— I will return in an hour or so."

"I will accompany you," said the parson.

"Nay, pardon me, but I think we two young men can talk more openly without a third person, even so wise and kind as you."

"Let Randal go," growled the squire. And Randal went.

He spent some time with Frank, and the reader will easily divine how that time was employed. As he left Frank's

lodgings, he found himself suddenly seized by the squire himself.

"I was too impatient to stay at home and listen to the parson's prosing," said Mr. Hazeldean, nervously. "I have shaken Dale off. Tell me what has passed. Oh, don't fear, — I 'm a man, and can bear the worst."

Randal drew the squire's arm within his, and led him into the adjacent park.

"My dear sir," said he, sorrowfully, "this is very confidential what I am about to say. I must repeat it to you, because, without such confidence, I see not how to advise you on the proper course to take. But if I betray Frank, it is for his good, and to his own father; — only do not tell him. He would never forgive me; it would forever destroy my influence over him."

"Go on, go on," gasped the squire; "speak out. I'll never tell the ungrateful boy that I learned his secrets from another."

"Then," said Randal, "the secret of his entanglement with Madame di Negra is simply this: he found her in debt — nay, on the point of being arrested —"

"Debt! arrested! Jezebel!"

"And in paying the debt himself, and saving her from arrest, he conferred on her the obligation which no woman of honour could accept save from an affianced husband. Poor Frank! — if sadly taken in, still we must pity and forgive him!"

Suddenly, to Randal's great surprise, the squire's whole face brightened up.

"I see, I see!" he exclaimed, slapping his thigh. "I have it, I have it! 'T is an affair of money! I can buy her off. If she took money from him — the mercenary, painted baggage! — why, then, she 'll take it from me. I don't care what it costs — half my fortune — all! I 'd be content never to see Hazeldean Hall again, if I could save my son, my own son, from disgrace and misery; for miserable he will be, when he knows he has broken my heart and his mother's. And for a creature like that! My boy, a thousand hearty thanks to you.

Where does the wench live? I'll go to her at once." And as he spoke, the squire actually pulled out his pocketbook, and began turning over and counting the bank-notes in it.

Randal at first tried to combat this bold resolution on the part of the squire; but Mr. Hazeldean had seized on it with all the obstinacy of his straightforward English mind. He cut Randal's persuasive eloquence off in the midst.

"Don't waste your breath! I've settled it; and if you don't tell me where she lives, 'tis easily found out, I suppose."

Randal mused a moment. "After all," thought he, "why not? He will be sure so to speak as to enlist her pride against himself, and to irritate Frank to the utmost. Let him go."

Accordingly he gave the information required; and, insisting with great earnestness on the squire's promise not to mention to Madame di Negra his knowledge of Frank's pecuniary aid (for that would betray Randal as the informant); and satisfying himself as he best might with the squire's prompt assurance, "that he knew how to settle matters, without saying why or wherefore, as long as he opened his purse wide enough," he accompanied Mr. Hazeldean back into the streets, and there left him,—fixing an hour in the evening for an interview at Limmer's, and hinting that it would be best to have that interview without the presence of the parson. "Excellent good man," said Randal, "but not with sufficient knowledge of the world for affairs of this kind, which *you* understand so well."

"I should think so," quoth the squire, who had quite recovered his good-humour. "And the parson is as soft as buttermilk. We must be firm here,—firm, sir." And the squire struck the end of his stick on the pavement, nodded to Randal, and went on to May Fair as sturdily and as confidently as if to purchase a prize cow at a cattle-show.

CHAPTER XII.

"BRING the light nearer," said John Burley,— "nearer still."

Leonard obeyed, and placed the candle on a little table by the sick man's bedside.

Burley's mind was partially wandering; but there was method in his madness. Horace Walpole said that "his stomach would survive all the rest of him." That which in Burley survived the last was his quaint, wild genius. He looked wistfully at the still flame of the candle: "It lives ever in the air!" said he.

"What lives ever?"

Burley's voice swelled, "Light!" He turned from Leonard, and again contemplated the little flame. "In the fixed star, in the Will-o'-the-wisp, in the great sun that illumines half a world, or the farthing rushlight by which the ragged student strains his eyes,—still the same flower of the elements! Light in the universe, thought in the soul—Ay, ay, go on with the simile. My head swims. Extinguish the light! You cannot; fool, it vanishes from your eye, but it is still in the space. Worlds must perish, suns shrivel up, matter and spirit both fall into nothingness, before the combinations whose union makes that little flame which the breath of a babe can restore to darkness, shall lose the power to form themselves into light once more. Lose the power!—no, the *necessity*: it is the one *Must* in creation. Ay, ay, very dark riddles grow clear now,—now when I could not cast up an addition sum in the baker's bill! What wise man denied that two and two made four? Do they not make four? I can't answer him. But I could answer a question that some wise men have contrived to make much knottier." He smiled softly, and turned his face for some minutes to the wall.

This was the second night on which Leonard had watched by his bedside, and Burley's state had grown rapidly worse. He could not last many days, perhaps many hours. But he had evinced an emotion beyond mere delight at seeing Leonard again. He had since then been calmer, more himself. "I feared I might have ruined you by my bad example," he said, with a touch of humour that became pathos as he added, "That idea preyed on me."

"No, no; you did me great good."

"Say that,—say it often," said Burley, earnestly; "it makes my heart feel so light."

He had listened to Leonard's story with deep interest, and was fond of talking to him of little Helen. He detected the secret at the young man's heart, and cheered the hopes that lay there, amidst fears and sorrows. Burley never talked seriously of his repentance; it was not in his nature to talk seriously of the things which he felt solemnly. But his high animal spirits were quenched with the animal power that fed them. Now, we go out of our sensual existence only when we are no longer enthralled by the Present, in which the senses have their realm. The sensual being vanishes when we are in the Past or the Future. The Present was gone from Burley; he could no more be its slave and its king.

It was most touching to see how the inner character of this man unfolded itself, as the leaves of the outer character fell off and withered,—a character no one would have guessed in him, an inherent refinement that was almost womanly; and he had all a woman's abnegation of self. He took the cares lavished on him so meekly. As the features of the old man return in the stillness of death to the aspect of youth,—the lines effaced, the wrinkles gone,—so, in seeing Burley now, you saw what he had been in his spring of promise. But he himself saw only what he had failed to be,—powers squandered, life wasted. "I once beheld," he said, "a ship in a storm. It was a cloudy, fitful day, and I could see the ship with all its masts fighting hard for life and for death. Then came night, dark as pitch, and I could only guess that the ship fought on. Towards the dawn the stars grew visible,

and once more I saw the ship: it was a wreck,—it went down just as the stars shone forth.”

When he had made that allusion to himself, he sat very still for some time, then he spread out his wasted hands, and gazed on them, and on his shrunken limbs. “Good,” said he, laughing low; “these hands were too large and rude for handling the delicate webs of my own mechanism, and these strong limbs ran away with me. If I had been a sickly, puny fellow, perhaps my mind would have had fair play. There was too much of brute body here! Look at this hand now! You can see the light through it! Good, good!”

Now, that evening, until he had retired to bed, Burley had been unusually cheerful, and had talked with much of his old eloquence, if with little of his old humour. Amongst other matters, he had spoken with considerable interest of some poems and other papers in manuscript which had been left in the house by a former lodger, and which, the reader may remember, Mrs. Goodyer had urged him in vain to read, in his last visit to her cottage. But *then* he had her husband Jacob to chat with, and the spirit bottle to finish, and the wild craving for excitement plucked his thoughts back to his London revels. Now poor Jacob was dead, and it was not brandy that the sick man drank from the widow’s cruse; and London lay afar amidst its fogs, like a world resolved back into *nebulæ*. So, to please his hostess and distract his own solitary thoughts, he had condescended (just before Leonard found him out) to peruse the memorials of a life obscure to the world, and new to his own experience of coarse joys and woes. “I have been making a romance, to amuse myself, from their contents,” said he. “They may be of use to you, brother author. I have told Mrs. Goodyer to place them in your room. Amongst those papers is a sort of journal,—a woman’s journal; it moved me greatly. A man gets into another world, strange to him as the orb of Sirius, if he can transport himself into the centre of a woman’s heart, and see the life there, so wholly unlike our own. Things of moment to us, to it so trivial; things trifling to us, to it so vast. There was this journal, in its dates reminding me of stormy

events in my own existence, and grand doings in the world's. And those dates there, chronicleing but the mysterious, unrevealed record of some obscure, loving heart! And in that chronicle, O Sir Poet, there was as much genius, vigour of thought, vitality of being, poured and wasted, as ever kind friend will say was lavished on the rude outer world by big John Burley! Genius, genius! are we all alike, then, save when we leash ourselves to some matter-of-fact material, and float over the roaring seas on a wooden plank or a herring tub?" And after he had uttered that cry of a secret anguish, John Burley had begun to show symptoms of growing fever and disturbed brain; and when they had got him into bed, he lay there muttering to himself, until, towards midnight, he had asked Leonard to bring the light nearer to him.

So now he again was quiet, with his face turned towards the wall; and Leonard stood by the bedside sorrowfully, and Mrs. Goodyer, who did not heed Burley's talk, and thought only of his physical state, was dipping cloths into iced water to apply to his forehead. But as she approached with these, and addressed him soothingly, Burley raised himself on his arm, and waved aside the bandages. "I do not need them," said he, in a collected voice. "I am better now. I and that pleasant light understand one another, and I believe all it tells me. Pooh, pooh, I do not rave." He looked so smilingly and so kindly into her face, that the poor woman, who loved him as her own son, fairly burst into tears. He drew her towards him, and kissed her forehead.

"Peace, old fool," said he, fondly. "You shall tell anglers hereafter how John Burley came to fish for the one-eyed perch which he never caught; and how, when he gave it up at the last, his baits all gone, and the line broken amongst the weeds, you comforted the baffled man. There are many good fellows yet in the world who will like to know that poor Burley did not die on a dunghill. Kiss me. Come, boy, you too. Now, God bless you, I should like to sleep." His cheeks were wet with the tears of both his listeners, and there was a moisture in his own eyes, which, nevertheless, beamed bright through the moisture.

He laid himself down again, and the old woman would have withdrawn the light. He moved uneasily. "Not that," he murmured,—"light to the last!" and putting forth his wan hand, he drew aside the curtain so that the light might fall full on his face. In a few minutes he was asleep, breathing calmly and regularly as an infant.

The old woman wiped her eyes, and drew Leonard softly into the adjoining room, in which a bed had been made up for him. He had not left the house since he had entered it with Dr. Morgan. "You are young, sir," said she, with kindness, "and the young want sleep. Lie down a bit: I will call you when he wakes."

"No, I could not sleep," said Leonard. "I will watch for you."

The old woman shook her head. "I must see the last of him, sir; but I know he will be angry when his eyes open on me, for he has grown very thoughtful of others."

"Ah, if he had but been as thoughtful of himself!" murmured Leonard; and he seated himself by the table, on which, as he leaned his elbow, he dislodged some papers placed there. They fell to the ground with a dumb, moaning, sighing sound.

"What is that?" said he, starting.

The old woman picked up the manuscripts and smoothed them carefully.

"Ah, sir, he bade me place these papers here. He thought they might keep you from fretting about him, in case you would sit up and wake. And he had a thought of me, too; for I have so pined to find out the poor young lady, who left them years ago. She was almost as dear to me as he is; dearer perhaps until now — when — when I am about to lose him!"

Leonard turned from the papers, without a glance at their contents: they had no interest for him at such a moment.

The hostess went on,—

"Perhaps she is gone to heaven before him; she did not look like one long for this world. She left us so suddenly. Many things of hers besides these papers are still here; but I

keep them aired and dusted, and strew lavender over them, in case she ever come for them again. You never heard tell of her, did you, sir?" she added, with great simplicity, and dropping a half courtesy.

"Of her — of whom?"

"Did not Mr. John tell you her name — dear, dear; Mrs. Bertram."

Leonard started; the very name so impressed upon his memory by Harley L'Estrange!

"Bertram!" he repeated. "Are you sure?"

"Oh, yes, sir! And many years after she had left us, and we had heard no more of her, there came a packet addressed to her here, from over sea, sir. We took it in, and kept it, and John would break the seal, to know if it would tell us anything about her; but it was all in a foreign language like, — we could not read a word."

"Have you the packet? Pray show it to me. It may be of the greatest value. To-morrow will do — I cannot think of that just now. Poor Burley!"

Leonard's manner indicated that he wished to talk no more, and to be alone. So Mrs. Goodyer left him, and stole back to Burley's room on tiptoe.

The young man remained in deep revery for some moments. "Light," he murmured. "How often 'Light' is the last word of those round whom the shades are gathering!"¹ He moved, and straight on his view through the cottage lattice there streamed light indeed, — not the miserable ray lit by a human hand, but the still and holy effulgence of a moonlit

¹ Every one remembers that Goethe's last words are said to have been, "More Light;" and perhaps what has occurred in the text may be supposed a plagiarism from those words. But, in fact, nothing is more common than the craving and demand for light a little before death. Let any consult his own sad experience in the last moments of those whose gradual close he has watched and tended. What more frequent than a prayer to open the shutters and let in the sun? What complaint more repeated and more touching than "that it is growing dark"? I once knew a sufferer, who did not then seem in immediate danger, suddenly order the sick room to be lit up as if for a gala. When this was told to the physician, he said gravely, "No worse sign."

heaven. It lay broad upon the humble floors, pierced across the threshold of the death chamber, and halted clear amidst its shadows.

Leonard stood motionless, his eye following the silvery silent splendour.

"And," he said inly — "and does this large erring nature, marred by its genial faults, this soul which should have filled a land, as yon orb the room, with a light that linked earth to heaven — does it pass away into the dark, and leave not a ray behind? Nay, if the elements of light are ever in the space, and when the flame goes out, return to the vital air, so thought once kindled lives forever around and about us, a part of our breathing atmosphere. Many a thinker, many a poet, may yet illumine the world, from the thoughts which yon genius, that will have no name, gave forth to wander through air, and recombine again in some new form of light."

Thus he went on in vague speculations, seeking, as youth enamoured of fame seeks too fondly, to prove that mind never works, however erratically, in vain, and to retain yet, as an influence upon earth, the soul about to soar far beyond the atmosphere where the elements that make fame abide. Not thus had the dying man interpreted the endurance of light and thought.

Suddenly, in the midst of his reverie, a loud cry broke on his ear. He shuddered as he heard, and hastened forebodingly into the adjoining room. The old woman was kneeling by the bedside, and chafing Burley's hand, eagerly looking into his face. A glance sufficed to Leonard. All was over. Burley had died in sleep,—calmly, and without a groan.

The eyes were half open, with that look of inexpressible softness which death sometimes leaves; and still they were turned towards the light; and the light burned clear.

Leonard closed tenderly the heavy lids; and as he covered the face, the lips smiled a serene farewell.

CHAPTER XIII.

WE have seen Squire Hazeldean (proud of the contents of his pocketbook, and his knowledge of the mercenary nature of foreign women) set off on his visit to Beatrice di Negra. Randal thus left, musing lone in the crowded streets, resolved with astute complacency the probable results of Mr. Hazeldean's bluff negotiation; and convincing himself that one of his vistas towards Fortune was becoming more clear and clear, he turned, with the restless activity of some founder of destined cities in a new settlement, to lop the boughs that cumbered and obscured the others. For truly, like a man in a vast Columbian forest, opening entangled space, now with the ready axe, now with the patient train that kindles the slower fire, this child of civilized life went toiling on against surrounding obstacles, resolute to destroy, but ever scheming to construct. And now Randal has reached Levy's dainty business-room, and is buried deep in discussion how to secure to himself, at the expense of his patron, the representation of Lansmere, and how to complete the contract which shall reannex to his forlorn inheritance some fragments of its ancient wealth.

Meanwhile, Chance fought on his side in the boudoir of May Fair. The squire had found the marchesa at home, briefly introduced himself and his business, told her she was mistaken if she had fancied she had taken in a rich heir in his son; that, thank Heaven, he could leave his estates to his ploughman, should he so please, but that he was willing to do things liberally; and whatever she thought Frank was worth, he was very ready to pay for.

At another time Beatrice would perhaps have laughed at this strange address; or she might, in some prouder moment, have fired up with all a patrician's resentment and a woman's pride; but now her spirit was crushed, her nerves shattered:

the sense of her degraded position, of her dependence on her brother, combined with her supreme unhappiness at the loss of those dreams with which Leonard had for a while charmed her wearied waking life,—all came upon her. She listened, pale and speechless; and the poor squire thought he was quietly advancing towards a favourable result, when she suddenly burst into a passion of hysterical tears; and just at that moment Frank himself entered the room. At the sight of his father, of Beatrice's grief, his sense of filial duty gave way. He was maddened by irritation, by the insult offered to the woman he loved, which a few trembling words from her explained to him,—maddened yet more by the fear that the insult had lost her to him; warm words ensued between son and father, to close with the peremptory command and vehement threat of the last.

“Come away this instant, sir! Come with me, or before the day is over, I strike you out of my will!”

The son's answer was not to his father; he threw himself at Beatrice's feet.

“Forgive him; forgive us both —”

“What! you prefer that stranger to me,—to the inheritance of Hazeldean!” cried the squire, stamping his foot.

“Leave your estates to whom you will; all that I care for in life is here!”

The squire stood still a moment or so, gazing on his son with a strange bewildered marvel at the strength of that mystic passion, which none not labouring under its fearful charm can comprehend, which creates the sudden idol that no reason justifies, and sacrifices to its fatal shrine alike the Past and the Future. Not trusting himself to speak, the father drew his hand across his eyes, and dashed away the bitter tear that sprang from a swelling and indignant heart; then he uttered an inarticulate sound, and, finding his voice gone, moved away to the door, and left the house.

He walked through the streets, bearing his head very erect, as a proud man does when deeply wounded, and striving to shake off some affection that he deems a weakness; and his trembling nervous fingers fumbled at the button of his coat,

trying to tighten the garment across his chest, as if to confirm a resolution that still sought to struggle out of the revolting heart.

Thus he went on, and the reader, perhaps, will wonder whither; and the wonder may not lessen when he finds the squire come to a dead pause in Grosvenor Square, and at the portico of his "distant brother's" stately house.

At the squire's brief inquiry whether Mr. Egerton was at home, the porter summoned the groom of the chambers; and the groom of the chambers, seeing a stranger, doubted whether his master was not engaged, but would take in the stranger's card and see.

"Ay, ay," muttered the squire, "this is true relationship! — my child prefers a stranger to me; why should I complain that I am a stranger in a brother's house? Sir," added the squire aloud, and very meekly — "sir, please to say to your master that I am William Hazeldean."

The servant bowed low, and without another word conducted the visitor into the statesman's library, and announcing Mr. Hazeldean, closed the door.

Audley was seated at his desk, the grim iron boxes still at his feet, but they were now closed and locked. And the ex-minister was no longer looking over official documents; letters spread open before him of far different nature; in his hand there lay a long lock of fair silken hair, on which his eyes were fixed sadly and intently. He started at the sound of his visitor's name, and the tread of the squire's stalwart footstep; and mechanically thrust into his bosom the relic of younger and warmer years, keeping his hand to his heart, which beat loud with disease under the light pressure of that golden hair.

The two brothers stood on the great man's lonely hearth, facing each other in silence, and noting unconsciously the change made in each during the long years in which they had never met.

The squire, with his portly size, his hardy sunburned cheeks, the partial baldness of his unfurrowed open forehead, looked his full age, — deep into middle life. Unmistakably he seemed

the *pater familias*, the husband and the father, the man of social domestic ties. But about Audley (really some few years junior to the squire), despite the lines of care on his handsome face, there still lingered the grace of youth. Men of cities retain youth longer than those of the country,—a remark which Buffon has not failed to make and to account for. Neither did Egerton betray the air of the married man; for ineffable solitariness seemed stamped upon one whose private life had long been so stern a solitude. No ray from the focus of Home played round that reserved, unjoyous, melancholy brow. In a word, Audley looked still the man for whom some young female heart might fondly sigh; and not the less because of the cold eye and compressed lip, which challenged interest even while seeming to repel it.

Audley was the first to speak, and to put forth the right hand, which he stole slowly from its place at his breast, on which the lock of hair still stirred to and fro at the heave of the labouring heart. “William,” said he, with his rich deep voice, “this is kind. You are come to see me, now that men say that I am fallen. The minister you censured is no more; and you see again the brother.”

The squire was softened at once by this address. He shook heartily the hand tendered to him; and then, turning away his head, with an honest conviction that Audley ascribed to him a credit which he did not deserve, he said, “No, no, Audley; I am more selfish than you think me. I have come—I have come to ask your advice,—no, not exactly that—your opinion. But you are busy?”

“Sit down, William. Old days were coming over me when you entered; days earlier still return now,—days, too, that leave no shadow when their suns are set.”

The proud man seemed to think he had said too much. His practical nature rebuked the poetic sentiment and phrase. He re-collected himself, and added, more coldly, “You would ask my opinion? What on? Some public matter—some parliamentary bill that may affect your property?”

“Am I such a mean miser as that? Property—property? what does property matter, when a man is struck down at his

own hearth? Property, indeed! But you have no child—happy brother!”

“Ay, ay; as you say, I am a happy man; childless! Has your son displeased you? I have heard him well spoken of, too.”

“Don’t talk of him. Whether his conduct be good or ill is my affair,” resumed the poor father, with a testy voice—jealous alike of Audley’s praise or blame of his rebellious son. Then he rose a moment, and made a strong gulp, as if for air; and laying his broad brown hand on his brother’s shoulder, said, “Randal Leslie tells me you are wise,—a consummate man of the world. No doubt you are so. And Parson Dale tells me that he is sure you have warm feelings,—which I take to be a strange thing for one who has lived so long in London, and has no wife and no child, a widower, and a member of parliament,—for a commercial city, too. Never smile; it is no smiling matter with me. You know a foreign woman, called Negra or Negro; not a blackymoor, though, by any means,—at least on the outside of her. Is she such a woman as a plain country gentleman would like his only son to marry — ay or no?”

“No, indeed,” answered Audley, gravely; “and I trust your son will commit no action so rash. Shall I see him, or her? Speak, my dear William. What would you have me do?”

“Nothing; you have said enough,” replied the squire, gloomily; and his head sank on his breast.

Audley took his hand, and pressed it fraternally. “William,” said the statesman, “we have been long estranged; but I do not forget that when we last met, at—at Lord Lansmere’s house, and when I took you aside, and said, ‘William, if I lose this election, I must resign all chance of public life; my affairs are embarrassed. I would not accept money from you,—I would seek a profession, and you can help me there,’ you divined my meaning, and said, ‘Take orders; the Hazeldean living is just vacant. I will get some one to hold it till you are ordained.’ I do not forget that. Would that I had thought earlier of so serene an escape from all that then tormented me! My lot might have been far happier.”

The squire eyed Audley with a surprise that broke forth from his more absorbing emotions. "Happier! Why, all things have prospered with you; and you are rich enough now; and—you shake your head. Brother, is it possible! do you want money? Pooh, not accept money from your mother's son!—stuff!" Out came the squire's pocketbook. Audley put it gently aside.

"Nay," said he, "I have enough for myself; but since you seek and speak with me thus affectionately, I will ask you one favour. Should I die before I can provide for my wife's kinsman, Randal Leslie, as I could wish, will you see to his fortunes, so far as you can, without injury to others—to your own son?"

"My son! He is provided for. He has the Casino estate—much good may it do him! You have touched on the very matter that brought me here. This boy, Randal Leslie, seems a praiseworthy lad, and has Hazeldean blood in his veins. You have taken him up because he is connected with your late wife. Why should I not take him up, too, when his grandmother was a Hazeldean? My main object in calling was to ask what you mean to do for him; for if you do not mean to provide for him, why, I will, as in duty bound. See your request comes at the right time; I think of altering my will. I can put him into the entail, besides a handsome legacy. You are sure he is a good lad,—and it will please you too, Audley!"

"But not at the expense of your son. And stay, William: as to this foolish marriage with Madame di Negra,—who told you Frank meant to take such a step?"

"He told me himself; but it is no matter. Randal and I both did all we could to dissuade him; and Randal advised me to come to you."

"He has acted generously, then, our kinsman Randal—I am glad to hear it," said Audley, his brow somewhat clearing. "I have no influence with this lady; but, at least, I can counsel her. Do not consider the marriage fixed because a young man desires it. Youth is ever hot and rash."

"Your youth never was," retorted the squire, bluntly.

"You married well enough, I'm sure. I will say one thing for you: you have been, to my taste, a bad politician — beg pardon — but you were always a gentleman. You would never have disgraced your family and married a —"

"Hush!" interrupted Egerton, gently. "Do not make matters worse than they are. Madame di Negra is of high birth in her own country; and if scandal —"

"Scandal!" cried the squire, shrinking, and turning pale. "Are you speaking of the wife of a Hazeldean? At least she shall never sit by the hearth at which now sits his mother; and whatever I may do for Frank, her children shall not succeed. No mongrel cross-breed shall kennel in English Hazeldean. Much obliged to you, Audley, for your good feeling; glad to have seen you; and hark ye, you startled me by that shake of your head, when I spoke of your wealth; and from what you say about Randal's prospects, I guess that you London gentlemen are not so thrifty as we are. You *shall* let me speak. I say again, that I have some thousands quite at your service. And though you are not a Hazeldean, still you are my mother's son; and now that I am about to alter my will, I can as well scratch in the name of Egerton as that of Leslie. Cheer up, cheer up: you are younger than I am, and you have no child; so you will live longer than I shall."

"My dear brother," answered Audley, "believe me, I shall never live to want your aid. And as to Leslie, add to the £ 5,000 I mean to give him an equal sum in your will, and I shall feel that he has received justice."

Observing that the squire, though he listened attentively, made no ready answer, Audley turned the subject again to Frank; and with the adroitness of a man of the world, backed by cordial sympathy in his brother's distress, he pleaded so well Frank's lame cause, urged so gently the wisdom of patience and delay, and the appeal to filial feeling rather than recourse to paternal threats, that the squire grew mollified in spite of himself, and left his brother's house a much less angry and less doleful man.

Mr. Hazeldean was still in the Square, when he came upon Randal himself, who was walking with a dark-whiskered,

showy gentleman, towards Egerton's house. Randal and the gentleman exchanged a hasty whisper, and the former then exclaimed,—

"What, Mr. Hazeldean, have you just left your brother's house? Is it possible?"

"Why, you advised me to go there, and I did. I scarcely knew what I was about. I am very glad I did go. Hang politics! hang the landed interest! what do I care for either now?"

"Foiled with Madame di Negra?" asked Randal, drawing the squire aside.

"Never speak of her again!" cried the squire, fiercely. "And as to that ungrateful boy — but I don't mean to behave harshly to him,— he shall have money enough to keep her if he likes, keep her from coming to me, keep him, too, from counting on my death, and borrowing post-obits on the Casino — for he'll be doing that next — no, I hope I wrong him there; I have been too good a father for him to count on my death already. After all," continued the squire, beginning to relax, "as Audley says, the marriage is not yet made; and if the woman has taken him in, he is young, and his heart is warm. Make yourself easy, my boy. I don't forget how kindly you took his part; and before I do anything rash, I'll at least consult with his poor mother."

Randal gnawed his pale lip, and a momentary cloud of disappointment passed over his face.

"True, sir," said he, gently; "true, you must not be rash. Indeed, I was thinking of you and poor dear Frank at the very moment I met you. It occurred to me whether we might not make Frank's very embarrassments a reason to induce Madame di Negra to refuse him; and I was on my way to Mr. Egerton, in order to ask his opinion, in company with the gentleman yonder."

"Gentleman yonder. Why should he thrust his long nose into my family affairs? Who the devil is he?"

"Don't ask, sir. Pray let me act."

But the squire continued to eye askant the dark-whiskered personage thus interposed between himself and his son, and

who waited patiently a few yards in the rear, carelessly re-adjusting the camellia in his button-hole.

"He looks very outlandish. Is he a foreigner too?" asked the squire at last.

"No, not exactly. However, he knows all about Frank's embarrassments; and —"

"Embarrassments! what, the debt he paid for that woman? How did he raise the money?"

"I don't know," answered Randal; "and that is the reason I asked Baron Levy to accompany me to Egerton's, that he might explain in private what I have no reason —"

"Baron Levy!" interrupted the squire. "Levy, Levy — I have heard of a Levy who has nearly ruined my neighbour Thornhill, — a money-lender. Zounds! is that the man who knows my son's affairs? I'll soon learn, sir."

Randal caught hold of the squire's arm: "Stop, stop; if you really insist upon learning more about Frank's debts, you must not appeal to Baron Levy directly, and as Frank's father: he will not answer you. But if I present you to him as a mere acquaintance of mine, and turn the conversation, as if carelessly, upon Frank, why, since, in the London world, such matters are never kept secret, except from the parents of young men, I have no doubt he will talk out openly."

"Manage it as you will," said the squire.

Randal took Mr. Hazeldean's arm, and joined Levy — "A friend of mine from the country, Baron." Levy bowed profoundly, and the three walked slowly on.

"By the by," said Randal, pressing significantly upon Levy's arm, "my friend has come to town upon the somewhat unpleasant business of settling the debts of another, — a young man of fashion, — a relation of his own. No one, sir (turning to the squire), could so ably assist you in such arrangements as could Baron Levy."

BARON (modestly, and with a moralizing air). — "I have some experience in such matters, and I hold it a duty to assist the parents and relations of young men who, from want of reflection, often ruin themselves for life. I hope the young gentleman in question is not in the hands of the Jews?"

RANDAL. — "Christians are as fond of good interest for their money as ever the Jews can be."

BARON. — "Granted, but they have not always so much money to lend. The first thing, sir" (addressing the squire), — "the first thing for you to do is to buy up such of your relation's bills and notes of hand as may be in the market. No doubt we can get them a bargain, unless the young man is heir to some property that may soon be his in the course of nature."

RANDAL. — "Not soon — Heaven forbid! His father is still a young man, — a fine healthy man," leaning heavily on Levy's arm; "and as to post-obits —"

BARON. — "Post-obits on sound security cost more to buy up, however healthy the obstructing relative may be."

RANDAL. — "I should hope that there are not many sons who can calculate, in cold blood, on the death of their fathers."

BARON. — "Ha, ha! He is young, our friend Randal; eh, sir?"

RANDAL. — "Well, I am not more scrupulous than others, I dare say; and I have often been pinched hard for money, but I would go barefoot rather than give security upon a father's grave! I can imagine nothing more likely to destroy natural feeling, nor to instil ingratitude and treachery into the whole character, than to press the hand of a parent, and calculate when that hand may be dust; than to sit down with strangers and reduce his life to the measure of an insurance-table; than to feel difficulties gathering round one, and mutter in fashionable slang, 'But it will be all well if the governor would but die.' And he who has accustomed himself to the relief of post-obits must gradually harden his mind to all this."

The squire groaned heavily; and had Randal proceeded another sentence in the same strain, the squire would have wept outright. "But," continued Randal, altering the tone of his voice, "I think that our young friend, of whom we were talking just now, Levy, before this gentleman joined us, has the same opinions as myself on this head. He may accept bills, but he would never sign post-obits."

BARON (who, with the apt docility of a managed charger to the touch of a rider's hand, had comprehended and complied with each quick sign of Randal's). — "Pooh! the young fellow we are talking of? Nonsense. He would not be so foolish as to give five times the percentage he otherwise might. Not sign post-obits! Of course he has signed one."

RANDAL. — "Hist! you mistake, you mistake!"

SQUIRE (leaving Randal's arm and seizing Levy's). — "Were you speaking of Frank Hazeldean?"

BARON. — "My dear sir, excuse me, I never mention names before strangers."

SQUIRE. — "Strangers again! Man, I am the boy's father! Speak out, sir," and his hand closed on Levy's arm with the strength of an iron vice.

BARON. — "Gently; you hurt me, sir: but I excuse your feelings. Randal, you are to blame for leading me into this indiscretion; but I beg to assure Mr. Hazeldean, that though his son has been a little extravagant —"

RANDAL. — "Owing chiefly to the arts of an abandoned woman."

BARON. — "Of an abandoned woman; — still he has shown more prudence than you would suppose; and this very post-obit is a proof of it. A simple act of that kind has enabled him to pay off bills that were running on till they would have ruined even the Hazeldean estate; whereas a charge on the reversion of the Casino —"

SQUIRE. — "He has done it then? He has signed a post-obit?"

RANDAL. — "No, no, Levy must be wrong."

BARON. — "My dear Leslie, a man of Mr. Hazeldean's time of life cannot have your romantic boyish notions. He must allow that Frank has acted in this like a lad of sense — very good head for business has my young friend Frank! And the best thing Mr. Hazeldean can do is quietly to buy up the post-obit, and thus he will place his son henceforth in his power."

SQUIRE. — "Can I see the deed with my own eyes?"

BARON. — "Certainly, or how could you be induced to buy it up? But on one condition; you must not betray me to

your son. And, indeed, take my advice, and don't say a word to him on the matter."

SQUIRE. — "Let me see it, let me see it with my own eyes! His mother else will never believe it — nor will I."

BARON. — "I can call on you this evening."

SQUIRE. — "Now, now!"

BARON. — "You can spare me, Randal; and you yourself can open to Mr. Egerton the other affair respecting Lansmere. No time should be lost, lest L'Estrange suggest a candidate."

RANDAL (whispering). — "Never mind me. This is more important." (Aloud) — "Go with Mr. Hazeldean. My dear kind friend" (to the squire), "do not let this vex you so much. After all, it is what nine young men out of ten would do in the same circumstances. And it is best you should know it; you may save Frank from further ruin, and prevent, perhaps, this very marriage."

"We will see," exclaimed the squire, hastily. "Now, Mr. Levy, come."

Levy and the squire walked on, not arm in arm, but side by side. Randal proceeded to Egerton's house.

"I am glad to see you, Leslie," said the ex-minister. "What is it I have heard? My nephew, Frank Hazeldean, proposes to marry Madame di Negra against his father's consent? How could you suffer him to entertain an idea so wild? And how never confide it to me?"

RANDAL. — "My dear Mr. Egerton, it is only to-day that I was informed of Frank's engagement. I have already seen him, and expostulated in vain; till then, though I knew your nephew admired Madame di Negra, I could never suppose he harboured a serious intention."

EGERTON. — "I must believe you, Randal. I will myself see Madame di Negra, though I have no power, and no right, to dictate to her. I have but little time for all such private business. The dissolution of parliament is so close at hand."

RANDAL (looking down). — "It is on that subject that I wished to speak to you, sir. You think of standing for Lansmere. Well, Baron Levy has suggested to me an idea that I could not, of course, even countenance, till I had spoken to

you. It seems that he has some acquaintance with the state of parties in that borough. He is informed that it is not only as easy to bring in two of our side as to carry one, but that it would make your election still more safe not to fight single-handed against two opponents; that if canvassing for yourself alone, you could not carry a sufficient number of plumper votes; that split votes would go from you to one or other of the two adversaries; that, in a word, it is necessary to pair you with a colleague. If it really be so, you of course will learn best from your own Committee; but should they concur in the opinion Baron Levy has formed, do I presume too much on your kindness to deem it possible that you might allow me to be the second candidate on your side? I should not say this, but that Levy told me you had some wish to see me in parliament, amongst the supporters of your policy. And what other opportunity can occur? Here the cost of carrying two would be scarcely more than that of carrying one. And Levy says the party would subscribe for my election; you, of course, would refuse all such aid for your own; and indeed, with your great name, and Lord Lansmere's interest, there can be little beyond the strict legal expenses."

As Randal spoke thus at length, he watched anxiously his patron's reserved, unrevealing countenance.

EGERTON (dryly). — "I will consider. You may safely leave in my hands any matter connected with your ambition and advancement. I have before told you I hold it a duty to do all in my power for the kinsman of my late wife, for one whose career I undertook to forward, for one whom honour has compelled to share in my own political reverses."

Here Egerton rang the bell for his hat and gloves, and walking into the hall, paused at the street door. There beckoning to Randal, he said, slowly, "You seem intimate with Baron Levy; I caution you against him,—a dangerous acquaintance, first to the purse, next to the honour."

RANDAL. — "I know it, sir; and am surprised myself at the acquaintance that has grown up between us. Perhaps its cause is in his respect for yourself."

EGERTON. — "Tut."

RANDAL. — "Whatever it be, he contrives to obtain a singular hold over one's mind, even where, as in my case, he has no evident interest to serve. How is this? It puzzles me!"

EGERTON. — "For his interest, it is most secured where he suffers it to be least evident; for his hold over the mind, it is easily accounted for. He ever appeals to two temptations, strong with all men,—Avarice and Ambition. Good-day."

RANDAL. — "Are you going to Madame di Negra's? Shall I not accompany you? Perhaps I may be able to back your own remonstrances."

EGERTON. — "No, I shall not require you."

RANDAL. — "I trust I shall hear the result of your interview? I feel so much interested in it. Poor Frank!"

Audley nodded. "Of course, of course."

CHAPTER XIV.

ON entering the drawing-room of Madame di Negra, the peculiar charm which the severe Audley Egerton had been ever reputed to possess with women would have sensibly struck one who had hitherto seen him chiefly in his relations with men in the business-like affairs of life. It was a charm in strong contrast to the ordinary manners of those who are emphatically called "Ladies' men." No artificial smile, no conventional, hollow blandness, no frivolous gossip, no varnish either of ungenial gayety or affected grace. The charm was in a simplicity that unbent more into kindness than it did with men. Audley's nature, whatever its faults and defects, was essentially masculine; and it was the sense of masculine power that gave to his voice a music when addressing the gentler sex, and to his manner a sort of indulgent tenderness that appeared equally void of insincerity and presumption.

Frank had been gone about half-an-hour, and Madame di Negra was scarcely recovered from the agitation into which

she had been thrown by the affront from the father and the pleading of the son.

Egerton took her passive hand cordially, and seated himself by her side.

"My dear marchesa," said he, "are we then likely to be near connections? And can you seriously contemplate marriage with my young nephew, Frank Hazeldean? You turn away. Ah, my fair friend, there are but two inducements to a free woman to sign away her liberty at the altar. I say a free woman, for widows are free, and girls are not. These inducements are, first, worldly position; secondly, love. Which of these motives can urge Madame di Negra to marry Mr. Frank Hazeldean?"

"There are other motives than those you speak of,—the need of protection, the sense of solitude, the curse of dependence, gratitude for honourable affection. But you men never know women!"

"I grant that you are right there,—we never do; neither do women ever know men. And yet each sex contrives to dupe and to fool the other! Listen to me. I have little acquaintance with my nephew, but I allow he is a handsome young gentleman, with whom a handsome young lady in her teens might fall in love in a ball-room. But you, who have known the higher order of our species, you who have received the homage of men, whose thoughts and mind leave the small talk of drawing-room triflers so poor and bald, you cannot look me in the face and say that it is any passion resembling love which you feel for my nephew. And as to position, it is right that I should inform you that if he marry you he will have none. He may risk his inheritance. You will receive no countenance from his parents. You will be poor, but not free. You will not gain the independence you seek for. The sight of a vacant, discontented face in that opposite chair will be worse than solitude. And as to grateful affection," added the man of the world, "it is a polite synonym for tranquil indifference."

"Mr. Egerton," said Beatrice, "people say you are made of bronze. Did you ever feel the want of a home?"

"I answer you frankly," replied the statesman, "if I had not felt it, do you think I should have been, and that I should be to the last, the joyless drudge of public life? Bronze though you call my nature, it would have melted away long since like wax in the fire, if I had sat idly down and dreamed of a *home*!"

"But we women," answered Beatrice, with pathos, "have no public life, and we do idly sit down and dream. Oh," she continued, after a short pause, and clasping her hands firmly together, "you think me worldly, grasping, ambitious; how different my fate had been had I known a home! — known one whom I could love and venerate; known one whose smiles would have developed the good that was once within me, and the fear of whose rebuking or sorrowful eye would have corrected what is evil."

"Yet," answered Audley, "nearly all women in the great world have had that choice once in their lives, and nearly all have thrown it away. How few of your rank really think of home when they marry! how few ask to venerate as well as to love! and how many, of every rank, when the home has been really gained, have wilfully lost its shelter, — some in neglectful weariness, some from a momentary doubt, distrust, caprice, a wild fancy, a passionate fit, a trifle, a straw, a dream! True, you women are ever dreamers. Common-sense, common earth, is above or below your comprehension."

Both now are silent. Audley first roused himself with a quick, writhing movement. "We two," said he, smiling half sadly, half cynically, — "we two must not longer waste time in talking sentiment. We know both too well what life, as it has been made for us by our faults or our misfortunes, truly is. And once again, I entreat you to pause before you yield to the foolish suit of my foolish nephew. Rely on it, you will either command a higher offer for your prudence to accept; or, if you needs must sacrifice rank and fortune, you, with your beauty and your romantic heart, will see one who, at least for a fair holiday season (if human love allows no more), can repay you for the sacrifice. Frank Hazeldean never can."

Beatrice turned away to conceal the tears that rushed to her eyes.

"Think over this well," said Audley, in the softest tones of his mellow voice. "Do you remember that when you first came to England, I told you that neither wedlock nor love had any lures for me? We grew friends upon that rude avowal, and therefore I now speak to you like some sage of old, wise because standing apart and aloof from all the affections and ties that mislead our wisdom. Nothing but real love — how rare it is; has one human heart in a million ever known it? — nothing but real love can repay us for the loss of freedom, the cares and fears of poverty, the cold pity of the world that we both despise and respect. And all these, and much more, follow the step you would inconsiderately take, — an imprudent marriage."

"Audley Egerton," said Beatrice, lifting her dark, moistened eyes, "you grant that real love does compensate for an imprudent marriage. You speak as if you had known such love — you! Can it be possible?"

"Real love — I thought that I knew it once. Looking back with remorse, I should doubt it now but for one curse that only real love, when lost, has the power to leave evermore behind it."

"What is that?"

"A void here," answered Egerton, striking his heart. "Desolation! — Adieu!"

He rose and left the room.

"Is it," murmured Egerton, as he pursued his way through the streets — "is it that, as we approach death, all the first fair feelings of young life come back to us mysteriously? Thus I have heard, or read, that in some country of old, children scattering flowers preceded a funeral bier."

CHAPTER XV.

AND so Leonard stood beside his friend's mortal clay, and watched, in the ineffable smile of death, the last gleam which the soul had left there; and so, after a time, he crept back to the adjoining room with a step as noiseless as if he had feared to disturb the dead. Wearied as he was with watching, he had no thought of sleep. He sat himself down by the little table, and leaned his face on his hand, musing sorrowfully. Thus time passed. He heard the clock from below strike the hours. In the house of death the sound of a clock becomes so solemn. The soul that we miss has gone so far beyond the reach of time! A cold, superstitious awe gradually stole over the young man. He shivered, and lifted his eyes with a start, half scornful, half defying. The moon was gone; the gray, comfortless dawn gleamed through the casement, and carried its raw, chilling light through the open doorway into the death-room. And there, near the extinguished fire, Leonard saw the solitary woman, weeping low, and watching still. He returned to say a word of comfort; she pressed his hand, but waved him away. He understood. She did not wish for other comfort than her quiet relief of tears. Again, he returned to his own chamber, and his eye this time fell upon the papers which he had hitherto disregarded. What made his heart stand still, and the blood then rush so quickly through his veins? Why did he seize upon those papers with so tremulous a hand, then lay them down, pause, as if to nerve himself, and look so eagerly again? He recognized the handwriting,—those fair, clear characters, so peculiar in their woman-like delicacy and grace, the same as in the wild, pathetic poems, the sight of which had made an era in his boyhood. From these pages the image of the mysterious Nora rose once more before him. He felt that he was with a mother. He went back, and closed the door gently, as if

with a jealous piety, to exclude each ruder shadow from the world of spirits, and be alone with that mournful ghost. For a thought written in warm, sunny life, and then suddenly rising up to us, when the hand that traced and the heart that cherished it are dust, is verily as a ghost. It is a likeness struck off of the fond human being, and surviving it. Far more truthful than bust or portrait, it bids us see the tear flow, and the pulse beat. What ghost can the churchyard yield to us like the writing of the dead?

The bulk of the papers had been once lightly sewn to each other; they had come undone, perhaps in Burley's rude hands, but their order was easily apparent. Leonard soon saw that they formed a kind of journal,—not, indeed, a regular diary, nor always relating to the things of the day. There were gaps in time—no attempt at successive narrative; sometimes, instead of prose, a hasty burst of verse, gushing evidently from the heart; sometimes all narrative was left untold, and yet, as it were, epitomized by a single burning line—a single exclamation—of woe or joy! Everywhere you saw records of a nature exquisitely susceptible; and, where genius appeared, it was so artless, that you did not call it genius, but emotion. At the onset the writer did not speak of herself in the first person. The manuscript opened with descriptions and short dialogues, carried on by persons to whose names only initial letters were assigned, all written in a style of simple innocent freshness, and breathing of purity and happiness, like a dawn of spring. Two young persons, humbly born, a youth and a girl, the last still in childhood, each chiefly self-taught, are wandering on Sabbath evenings among green dewy fields, near the busy town, in which labour awhile is still. Few words pass between them. You see at once, though the writer does not mean to convey it, how far beyond the scope of her male companion flies the heavenward imagination of the girl. It is he who questions, it is she who answers; and soon there steals upon you, as you read, the conviction that the youth loves the girl, and loves in vain. All in this writing, though terse, is so truthful! Leonard, in the youth, already recognizes the rude imperfect scholar, the

village bard, Mark Fairfield. Then there is a gap in description; but there are short weighty sentences, which show deepening thought, increasing years, in the writer. And though the innocence remains, the happiness begins to be less vivid on the page.

Now, insensibly, Leonard finds that there is a new phase in the writer's existence. Scenes no longer of humble, work-day rural life surround her, and a fairer and more dazzling image succeeds to the companion of the Sabbath eves. This image Nora evidently loves to paint,—it is akin to her own genius; it captivates her fancy; it is an image that she (in-born artist, and conscious of her art) feels to belong to a brighter and higher school of the Beautiful. And yet the virgin's heart is not awakened,—no trace of the heart yet there! The new image thus introduced is one of her own years, perhaps; nay, it may be younger still, for it is a boy that is described, with his profuse fair curls, and eyes new to grief, and confronting the sun as a young eagle's; with veins so full of the wine of life, that they overflow into every joyous whim; with nerves quiveringly alive to the desire of glory; with the frank generous nature, rash in its laughing scorn of the world, which it has not tried. Who was this boy? it perplexed Leonard. He feared to guess. Soon, less told than implied, you saw that this companionship, however it chanced, brings fear and pain on the writer. Again (as before, with Mark Fairfield), there is love on the one side and not on the other; with her there is affectionate, almost sisterly, interest, admiration, gratitude, but a something of pride or of terror that keeps back love.

Here Leonard's interest grew intense. Were there touches by which conjecture grew certainty; and he recognized, through the lapse of years, the boy-lover in his own generous benefactor?

Fragments of dialogue now began to reveal the suit of an ardent, impassioned nature, and the simple wonder and strange alarm of a listener who pitied but could not sympathize. Some great worldly distinction of rank between the two became visible,—that distinction seemed to arm the virtue and

steel the affections of the lowlier born. Then a few sentences, half blotted out with tears, told of wounded and humbled feelings,—some one invested with authority, as if the suitor's parent, had interfered, questioned, reproached, counselled. And it was evident that the suit was not one that dishonoured; it wooed to flight, but still to marriage.

And now these sentences grew briefer still, as with the decision of a strong resolve. And to these there followed a passage so exquisite, that Leonard wept unconsciously as he read. It was the description of a visit spent at home previous to some sorrowful departure. He caught the glimpse of a proud and vain, but a tender wistful mother, of a father's fonder but less thoughtful love. And then came a quiet soothing scene between the girl and her first village lover, ending thus: "So she put M.'s hand into her sister's, and said, 'You loved me through the fancy, love her with the heart,' and left them comprehending each other, and betrothed."

Leonard sighed. He understood now how Mark Fairfield saw, in the homely features of his unlettered wife, the reflection of the sister's soul and face.

A few words told the final parting,—words that were a picture. The long friendless highway, stretching on — on — towards the remorseless city, and the doors of home opening on the desolate thoroughfare, and the old pollard-tree beside the threshold, with the ravens wheeling round it and calling to their young. He too had watched that threshold from the same desolate thoroughfare. He too had heard the cry of the ravens. Then came some pages covered with snatches of melancholy verse, or some reflections of dreamy gloom.

The writer was in London, in the house of some high-born patroness,—that friendless shadow of a friend which the jargon of society calls "companion." And she was looking on the bright storm of the world as through prison bars. Poor bird, afar from the greenwood, she had need of song,—it was her last link with freedom and nature. The patroness seems to share in her apprehensions of the boy suitor, whose wild rash prayers the fugitive had resisted; but to fear lest the suitor should be degraded, not the one

whom he pursues,—fear an alliance ill-suited to a high-born heir. And this kind of fear stings the writer's pride, and she grows harsh in her judgment of him who thus causes but pain where he proffers love. Then there is a reference to some applicant for her hand, who is pressed upon her choice; and she is told that it is her duty so to choose, and thus deliver a noble family from a dread that endures so long as her hand is free. And of this fear, and of this applicant, there breaks out a petulant yet pathetic scorn. After this the narrative, to judge by the dates, pauses for days and weeks, as if the writer had grown weary and listless,—suddenly to reopen in a new strain, eloquent with hopes and with fears never known before. The first person was abruptly assumed,—it was the living "I" that now breathed and moved along the lines. How was this? The woman was no more a shadow and a secret unknown to herself. She had assumed the intense and vivid sense of individual being; and love spoke loud in the awakened human heart.

A personage not seen till then appeared on the page. And ever afterwards this personage was only named as "*He*," as if the one and sole representative of all the myriads that walk the earth. The first notice of this prominent character on the scene showed the restless, agitated effect produced on the writer's imagination. He was invested with a romance probably not his own. He was described in contrast to the brilliant boy whose suit she had feared, pitied, and now sought to shun,—described with a grave and serious, but gentle mien, a voice that imposed respect, an eye and lip that showed collected dignity of will. Alas! the writer betrayed herself, and the charm was in the contrast, not to the character of the earlier lover, but her own. And now, leaving Leonard to explore and guess his way through the gaps and chasms of the narrative, it is time to place before the reader what the narrative alone will not reveal to Leonard.

CHAPTER XVI.

NORA AVENEL had fled from the boyish love of Harley L'Estrange, recommended by Lady Lansmere to a valetudinarian relative of her own, Lady Jane Horton, as companion. But Lady Lansmere could not believe it possible that the low-born girl could long sustain her generous pride, and reject the ardent suit of one who could offer to her the prospective coronet of a countess. She continually urged upon Lady Jane the necessity of marrying Nora to some one of rank less disproportioned to her own, and empowered that lady to assure any such wooer of a dowry far beyond Nora's station. Lady Jane looked around, and saw in the outskirts of her limited social ring a young solicitor, a peer's natural son, who was on terms of more than business-like intimacy with the fashionable clients whose distresses made the origin of his wealth. The young man was handsome, well-dressed, and bland. Lady Jane invited him to her house; and, seeing him struck with the rare loveliness of Nora, whispered the hint of the dower. The fashionable solicitor, who afterwards ripened into Baron Levy, did not need that hint; for, though then poor, he relied on himself for fortune, and, unlike Randal, he had warm blood in his veins. But Lady Jane's suggestions made him sanguine of success; and when he formally proposed, and was as formally refused, his self-love was bitterly wounded. Vanity in Levy was a powerful passion; and with the vain, hatred is strong, revenge is rankling. Levy retired, concealing his rage; nor did he himself know how vindictive that rage, when it cooled into malignancy, could become, until the arch-fiend OPPORTUNITY prompted its indulgence and suggested its design.

Lady Jane was at first very angry with Nora for the rejection of a suitor whom she had presented as eligible. But the pathetic grace of this wonderful girl had crept into her heart,

and softened it even against family prejudice; and she gradually owned to herself that Nora was worthy of some one better than Mr. Levy.

Now, Harley had ever believed that Nora returned his love, and that nothing but her own sense of gratitude to his parents, her own instincts of delicacy, made her deaf to his prayers. To do him justice, wild and headstrong as he then was, his suit would have ceased at once had he really deemed it persecution. Nor was his error unnatural; for his conversation, till it had revealed his own heart, could not fail to have dazzled and delighted the child of genius; and her frank eyes would have shown the delight. How, at his age, could he see the distinction between the Poetess and the Woman? The poetess was charmed with rare promise in a soul of which the very errors were the extravagances of richness and beauty. But the woman — no! the woman required some nature not yet undeveloped, and all at turbulent, if brilliant, strife with its own noble elements, but a nature formed and full-grown. Harley was a boy, and Nora was one of those women who must find or fancy an Ideal that commands and almost awes them into love.

Harley discovered, not without difficulty, Nora's new residence. He presented himself at Lady Jane's, and she, with grave rebuke, forbade him the house. He found it impossible to obtain an interview with Nora. He wrote, but he felt sure that his letters never reached her, since they were unanswered. His young heart swelled with rage. He dropped threats, which alarmed all the fears of Lady Lansmere, and even the prudent apprehensions of his friend, Audley Egerton. At the request of the mother, and equally at the wish of the son, Audley consented to visit at Lady Jane's, and make acquaintance with Nora.

"I have such confidence in you," said Lady Lansmere, "that if you once know the girl, your advice will be sure to have weight with her. You will show her how wicked it would be to let Harley break our hearts and degrade his station."

"I have such confidence in you," said young Harley, "that if you once know my Nora, you will no longer side with my

mother. You will recognize the nobility which nature only can create, you will own that Nora is worthy a rank more lofty than mine; and my mother so believes in your wisdom, that, if you plead in my cause, you will convince even her."

Audley listened to both with his intelligent, half-incredulous smile; and wholly of the same opinion as Lady Lansmere, and sincerely anxious to save Harley from an indiscretion that his own notions led him to regard as fatal, he resolved to examine this boasted pearl, and to find out its flaws. Audley Egerton was then in the prime of his earnest, resolute, ambitious youth. The stateliness of his natural manners had then a suavity and polish which, even in later and busier life, it never wholly lost; since, in spite of the briefer words and the colder looks by which care and power mark the official man, the minister had ever enjoyed that personal popularity which the indefinable, external *something*, that wins and pleases, can alone confer. But he had even then, as ever, that felicitous reserve which Rochefoucauld has called the "mystery of the body,"—that thin yet guardian veil which reveals but the strong outlines of character, and excites so much of interest by provoking so much of conjecture. To the man who is born with this reserve, which is wholly distinct from shyness, the world gives credit for qualities and talents beyond those that it perceives; and such characters are attractive to others in proportion as these last are gifted with the imagination which loves to divine the unknown.

At the first interview, the impression which this man produced upon Nora Avenel was profound and strange. She had heard of him before as the one whom Harley most loved and looked up to; and she recognized at once in his mien, his aspect, his words, the very tone of his deep tranquil voice, the power to which woman, whatever her intellect, never attains; and to which, therefore, she imputes a nobility not always genuine,—namely, the power of deliberate purpose and self-collected, serene ambition. The effect that Nora produced on Egerton was not less sudden. He was startled by a beauty of face and form that belonged to that rarest order, which we never behold but once or twice in our lives.

He was yet more amazed to discover that the aristocracy of mind could bestow a grace that no aristocracy of birth could surpass. He was prepared for a simple, blushing village girl, and involuntarily he bowed low his proud front at the first sight of that delicate bloom, and that exquisite gentleness which is woman's surest passport to the respect of man. Neither in the first, nor the second, nor the third interview, nor, indeed, till after many interviews, could he summon up courage to commence his mission, and allude to Harley. And when he did so at last his words faltered. But Nora's words were clear to him. He saw that Harley was not loved; and a joy, which he felt as guilty, darted through his whole frame. From that interview Audley returned home greatly agitated, and at war with himself. Often, in the course of this story, has it been hinted that, under all Egerton's external coldness and measured self-control, lay a nature capable of strong and stubborn passions. Those passions broke forth then. He felt that love had already entered into the heart, which the trust of his friend should have sufficed to guard.

"I will go there no more," said he, abruptly, to Harley.

"But why?"

"The girl does not love you. Cease then to think of her."

Harley disbelieved him, and grew indignant. But Audley had every worldly motive to assist his sense of honour. He was poor, though with the reputation of wealth, deeply involved in debt, resolved to rise in life, tenacious of his position in the world's esteem. Against a host of counteracting influences, love fought single-handed. Audley's was a strong nature; but, alas! in strong natures, if resistance to temptation is of granite, so the passions that they admit are of fire.

Trite is the remark that the destinies of our lives often date from the impulses of unguarded moments. It was so with this man, to an ordinary eye so cautious and so deliberate. Harley one day came to him in great grief; he had heard that Nora was ill: he implored Audley to go once more and ascertain. Audley went. Lady Jane Horton, who was suffering under a disease which not long afterwards proved

fatal, was too ill to receive him. He was shown into the room set apart as Nora's. While waiting for her entrance, he turned mechanically over the leaves of an album, which Nora, suddenly summoned away to attend Lady Jane, had left behind her on the table. He saw the sketch of his own features; he read words inscribed below it,— words of such artless tenderness, and such unhoping sorrow, words written by one who had been accustomed to regard her genius as her sole confidant, under Heaven; to pour out to it, as the solitary poet-heart is impelled to do, thoughts, feelings, the confession of mystic sighs, which it would never breathe to a living ear, and, save at such moments, scarcely acknowledge to itself. Audley saw that he was beloved, and the revelation, with a sudden light, consumed all the barriers between himself and his own love. And at that moment Nora entered. She saw him bending over the book. She uttered a cry, sprang forward, and then sank down, covering her face with her hands. But Audley was at her feet. He forgot his friend, his trust; he forgot ambition, he forgot the world. It was his own cause that he pleaded,— his own love that burst forth from his lips. And when the two that day parted, they were betrothed each to each. Alas for them, and alas for Harley!

And now this man, who had hitherto valued himself as the very type of gentleman, whom all his young contemporaries had so regarded and so revered, had to press the hand of a confiding friend, and bid adieu to truth. He had to amuse, to delay, to mislead his boy-rival,— to say that he was already subduing Nora's hesitating doubts, and that with a little time, she could be induced to consent to forget Harley's rank, and his parent's pride, and become his wife. And Harley believed in Egerton, without one suspicion on the mirror of his loyal soul.

Meanwhile, Audley, impatient of his own position,— impatient, as strong minds ever are, to hasten what they have once resolved, to terminate a suspense that every interview with Harley tortured alike by jealousy and shame, to pass out of the reach of scruples, and to say to himself, "Right or wrong, there is no looking back; the deed is done," — Audley, thus

hurried on by the impetus of his own power of will, pressed for speedy and secret nuptials,—secret, till his fortunes, then wavering, were more assured, his career fairly commenced. This was not his strongest motive, though it was one. He shrank from the discovery of his wrong to his friend, desired to delay the self-humiliation of such announcement, until, as he persuaded himself, Harley's boyish passion was over,—had yielded to the new allurements that would naturally beset his way. Stifling his conscience, Audley sought to convince himself that the day would soon come when Harley could hear with indifference that Nora Avenel was another's. "The dream of an hour, at his age," murmured the elder friend; "but at mine the passion of a life!" He did not speak of these latter motives for concealment to Nora. He felt that to own the extent of his treason to a friend would lower him in her eyes. He spoke therefore but slightly of Harley,—treated the boy's suit as a thing past and gone. He dwelt only on reasons that compelled self-sacrifice on his side or hers. She did not hesitate which to choose. And so, where Nora loved, so submissively did she believe in the superiority of the lover, that she would not pause to hear a murmur from her own loftier nature, or question the propriety of what he deemed wise and good.

Abandoning prudence in this arch affair of life, Audley still preserved his customary caution in minor details. And this indeed was characteristic of him throughout all his career,—heedless in large things, wary in small. He would not trust Lady Jane Horton with his secret, still less Lady Lansmere. He simply represented to the former that Nora was no longer safe from Harley's determined pursuit under Lady Jane's roof, and that she had better elude the boy's knowledge of her movements, and go quietly away for a while, to lodge with some connection of her own.

And so, with Lady Jane's acquiescence, Nora went first to the house of a very distant kinswoman of her mother's, and afterwards to one that Egerton took as their bridal home, under the name of Bertram. He arranged all that might render their marriage most free from the chance of premature dis-

covery. But it so happened on the very morning of their bridal, that one of the witnesses he selected (a confidential servant of his own) was seized with apoplexy. Considering, in haste, where to find a substitute, Egerton thought of Levy, his own private solicitor, his own fashionable money-lender, a man with whom he was then as intimate as a fine gentleman is with the lawyer of his own age, who knows all his affairs, and has helped, from pure friendship, to make them as bad as they are! Levy was thus suddenly summoned. Egerton, who was in great haste, did not at first communicate to him the name of the intended bride; but he said enough of the imprudence of the marriage, and his reasons for secrecy, to bring on himself the strongest remonstrances; for Levy had always reckoned on Egerton's making a wealthy marriage, — leaving to Egerton the wife, and hoping to appropriate to himself the wealth, all in the natural course of business. Egerton did not listen to him, but hurried him on towards the place at which the ceremony was to be performed; and Levy actually saw the bride before he had learned her name. The usurer masked his raging emotions, and fulfilled his part in the rites. His smile, when he congratulated the bride, might have shot cold into her heart; but her eyes were cast on the earth, seeing there but a shadow from heaven, and her heart was blindly sheltering itself in the bosom to which it was given evermore. She did not perceive the smile of hate that barbed the words of joy. Nora never thought it necessary later to tell Egerton that Levy had been a refused suitor. Indeed, with the exquisite tact of love, she saw that such a confidence, the idea of such a rival, would have wounded the pride of her high-bred, well-born husband.

And now, while Harley L'Estrange, frantic with the news that Nora had left Lady Jane's roof, and purposely misled into wrong directions, was seeking to trace her refuge in vain, now Egerton, in an assumed name, in a remote quarter, far from the clubs, in which his word was oracular, far from the pursuits, whether of pastime or toil, that had hitherto engrossed his active mind, gave himself up, with wonder at his own surrender, to the only vision of fairyland that ever

weighs down the watchful eyelids of hard ambition. The world for a while shut out, he missed it not. He knew not of it. He looked into two loving eyes that haunted him ever after, through a stern and arid existence, and said murmuringly, "Why, this, then, is real happiness!" Often, often, in the solitude of other years, to repeat to himself the same words, save that for *is*, he then murmured *was*! And Nora, with her grand, full heart, all her luxuriant wealth of fancy and of thought, child of light and of song, did she then never discover that there was something comparatively narrow and sterile in the nature to which she had linked her fate? Not there could ever be sympathy in feelings, brilliant and shifting as the tints of the rainbow. When Audley pressed her heart to his own, could he comprehend one finer throb of its beating? Was all the iron of his mind worth one grain of the gold she had cast away in Harley's love?

Did Nora already discover this? Surely no. Genius feels no want, no repining, while the heart is contented. Genius in her paused and slumbered: it had been as the ministrant of solitude: it was needed no more. If a woman loves deeply some one below her own grade in the mental and spiritual orders, how often we see that she unconsciously quits her own rank, comes meekly down to the level of the beloved, is afraid lest he should deem her the superior,—she who would not even be the equal. Nora knew no more that she had genius; she only knew that she had love.

And so here, the journal which Leonard was reading changed its tone, sinking into that quiet happiness which is but quiet because it is so deep. This interlude in the life of a man like Audley Egerton could never have been long; many circumstances conspired to abridge it. His affairs were in great disorder; they were all under Lévy's management. Demands that had before slumbered, or been mildly urged, grew menacing and clamorous. Harley, too, returned to London from his futile researches, and looked out for Audley. Audley was forced to leave his secret Eden, and reappear in the common world; and thenceforward it was only by stealth that he came to his bridal home,—a visitor, no more the inmate. But more

loud and fierce grew the demands of his creditors, now when Egerton had most need of all which respectability and position and belief of pecuniary independence can do to raise the man who has encumbered his arms, and crippled his steps towards fortune. He was threatened with writs, with prison. Levy said "that to borrow more would be but larger ruin," shrugged his shoulders, and even recommended a voluntary retreat to the King's Bench. "No place so good for frightening one's creditors into compounding their claims; but why," added Levy, with covert sneer, "why not go to young L'Estrange,—a boy made to be borrowed from!"

Levy, who had known from Lady Jane of Harley's pursuit of Nora, had learned already how to avenge himself on Egerton. Audley could not apply to the friend he had betrayed. And as to other friends, no man in town had a greater number. And no man in town knew better that he should lose them all if he were once known to be in want of their money. Mortified, harassed, tortured, shunning Harley, yet ever sought by him, fearful of each knock at his door, Audley Egerton escaped to the mortgaged remnant of his paternal estate, on which there was a gloomy manor-house, long uninhabited, and there applied a mind, afterwards renowned for its quick comprehension of business, to the investigation of his affairs, with a view to save some wreck from the flood that swelled momentarily around him.

And now — to condense as much as possible a record that runs darkly on into pain and sorrow — now Levy began to practise his vindictive arts; and the arts gradually prevailed. On pretence of assisting Egerton in the arrangement of his affairs, which he secretly contrived, however, still more to complicate, he came down frequently to Egerton Hall for a few hours, arriving by the mail, and watching the effect which Nora's almost daily letters produced on the bridegroom, irritated by the practical cares of life. He was thus constantly at hand to instil into the mind of the ambitious man a regret for the imprudence of hasty passion, or to embitter the remorse which Audley felt for his treachery to L'Estrange. Thus ever bringing before the mind of the harassed debtor,

images at war with love, and with the poetry of life, he disattuned it (so to speak) for the reception of Nora's letters, all musical as they were with such thoughts as the most delicate fancy inspires to the most earnest love. Egerton was one of those men who never confide their affairs frankly to women. Nora, when she thus wrote, was wholly in the dark as to the extent of his stern prosaic distress. And so — and so — Levy always near — type of the prose of life in its most cynic form — so by degrees all that redundant affluence of affection, with its gushes of grief for his absence, prayers for his return, sweet reproach if a post failed to bring back an answer to the woman's yearning sighs, — all this grew, to the sensible, positive man of real life, like sickly romantic exaggeration. The bright arrows shot too high into heaven to hit the mark set so near to the earth. Ah, common fate of all superior natures! What treasure, and how wildly wasted!

"By-the-by," said Levy, one morning, as he was about to take leave of Audley and return to town, — "by-the-by, I shall be this evening in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Egerton."

EGERTON. — "Say Mrs. Bertram!"

LEVY. — "Ay; will she not be in want of some pecuniary supplies?"

EGERTON. — "My wife! — Not yet. I must first be wholly ruined before she can want; and if I were so, do you think I should not be by her side?"

LEVY. — "I beg pardon, my dear fellow; your pride of gentleman is so susceptible that it is hard for a lawyer not to wound it unawares. Your wife, then, does not know the exact state of your affairs?"

EGERTON. — "Of course not. Who would confide to a woman things in which she could do nothing, except to tease one the more?"

LEVY. — "True, and a poetess too! I have prevented your finishing your answer to Mrs. Bertram's last letter. Can I take it — it may save a day's delay — that is, if you do not object to my calling on her this evening."

EGERTON (sitting down to his unfinished letter). — "Object! no."

LEVY (looking at his watch). — “Be quick, or I shall lose the coach.”

EGERTON (sealing the letter). — “There. And I should be obliged to you if you *would* call; and without alarming her as to my circumstances, you can just say that you know I am much harassed about important affairs at present, and so soothe the effects of my very short answers —”

LEVY. — “To those doubly-crossed, very long letters, — I will.”

“Poor Nora,” said Egerton, sighing, “she will think this answer brief and churlish enough. Explain my excuses kindly, so that they will serve for the future. I really have no time and no heart for sentiment. The little I ever had is well-nigh worried out of me. Still I love her fondly and deeply.”

LEVY. — “You must have done so. I never thought it in you to sacrifice the world to a woman.”

EGERTON. — “Nor I either; but,” added the strong man, conscious of that power which rules the world infinitely more than knowledge, conscious of tranquil courage, “but I have not sacrificed the world yet. This right arm shall bear up her and myself too.”

LEVY. — “Well said! but in the mean while, for heaven’s sake, don’t attempt to go to London, nor to leave this place; for, in that case, I know you will be arrested, and then adieu to all hopes of parliament,—of a career.”

Audley’s haughty countenance darkened; as the dog, in his bravest mode, turns dismayed from the stone plucked from the mire, so, when Ambition rears itself to defy mankind, whisper “disgrace and a jail,” — and, lo, crestfallen, it slinks away! That evening Levy called on Nora, and ingratiating himself into her favour by praise of Egerton, with indirect humble apologetic allusions to his own former presumption, he prepared the way to renewed visits; she was so lonely, and she so loved to see one who was fresh from seeing Audley, one who would talk to her of *him*! By degrees the friendly respectful visitor thus stole into her confidence; and then, with all his panegyrics on Audley’s superior powers

and gifts, he began to dwell upon the young husband's worldly aspirations, and care for his career; dwell on them so as vaguely to alarm Nora,—to imply that, dear as she was, she was still but second to Ambition. His way thus prepared, he next began to insinuate his respectful pity at her equivocal position, dropped hints of gossip and slander, feared that the marriage might be owned too late to preserve reputation. And then what would be the feelings of the proud Egerton if his wife were excluded from that world whose opinion he so prized? Insensibly thus he led her on to express (though timidly) her own fear, her own natural desire, in her letters to Audley. When could the marriage be proclaimed? Proclaimed! Audley felt that to proclaim such a marriage at such a moment would be to fling away his last cast for fame and fortune. And Harley, too,—Harley still so uncured of his frantic love! Levy was sure to be at hand when letters like these arrived.

And now Levy went further still in his determination to alienate these two hearts. He contrived, by means of his various agents, to circulate through Nora's neighbourhood the very slanders at which he had hinted. He contrived that she should be insulted when she went abroad, outraged at home by the sneers of her own servant, and tremble with shame at her own shadow upon her abandoned bridal hearth.

Just in the midst of this intolerable anguish, Levy reappeared. His crowning hour was ripe. He intimated his knowledge of the humiliations Nora had undergone, expressed his deep compassion, offered to intercede with Egerton "to do her justice." He used ambiguous phrases, that shocked her ear and tortured her heart, and thus provoked her on to demand him to explain; and then, throwing her into a wild state of indefinite alarm, in which he obtained her solemn promise not to divulge to Audley what he was about to communicate, he said, with villanous hypocrisy of reluctant shame, "that her marriage was not strictly legal; that the forms required by the law had not been complied with; that Audley, unintentionally or purposely, had left himself free to disown the rite and desert the bride." While Nora stood

stunned and speechless at a falsehood which, with lawyer-like show, he contrived to make truth-like to her inexperience, he hurried rapidly on, to re-awake on her mind the impression of Audley's pride, ambition, and respect for worldly position. "These are your obstacles," said he; "but I think I may induce him to repair the wrong, and right you at last." Righted at last — oh, infamy!

Then Nora's anger burst forth. She believe such a stain on Audley's honour!

"But where was the honour when he betrayed his friend? Did you not know that he was entrusted by Lord L'Estrange to plead for him. How did he fulfil the trust?"

"Plead for L'Estrange!" Nora had not been exactly aware of this, — in the sudden love preceding those sudden nuptials, so little touching Harley (beyond Audley's first timid allusions to his suit, and her calm and cold reply) had been spoken by either.

Levy resumed. He dwelt fully on the trust and the breach of it, and then said: "In Egerton's world, man holds it far more dishonour to betray a man than to dupe a woman; and if Egerton could do the one, why doubt that he would do the other? But do not look at me with those indignant eyes. Put himself to the test; write to him to say that the suspicions amidst which you live have become intolerable, that they infect even yourself, despite your reason, that the secrecy of your nuptials, his prolonged absence, his brief refusal, on unsatisfactory grounds, to proclaim your tie, all distract you with a terrible doubt. Ask him, at least (if he will not yet declare your marriage), to satisfy you that the rites were legal."

"I will go to him," cried Nora, impetuously.

"Go to him! — in his own house! What a scene, what a scandal! Could he ever forgive you?"

"At least, then, I will implore him to come here. I cannot write such horrible words; I cannot! I cannot! Go, go!"

Levy left her, and hastened to two or three of Audley's most pressing creditors, — men, in fact, who went entirely by Levy's own advice. He bade them instantly surround

Audley's country residence with bailiffs. Before Egerton could reach Nora, he would thus be lodged in a jail. These preparations made, Levy himself went down to Audley, and arrived, as usual, an hour or two before the delivery of the post.

And Nora's letter came; and never was Audley's grave brow more dark than when he read it. Still, with his usual decision, he resolved to obey her wish,—rang the bell, and ordered his servant to put up a change of dress, and send for post-horses.

Levy then took him aside, and led him to the window.

"Look under yon trees. Do you see those men? They are bailiffs. This is the true reason why I come to you to-day. You cannot leave this house."

Egerton recoiled. "And this frantic, foolish letter at such a time!" he muttered, striking the open page, full of love in the midst of terror, with his clenched hand.

O Woman, Woman! if thy heart be deep, and its chords tender, beware how thou lovest the man with whom all that plucks him from the hard cares of the workday world is frenzy or a folly! He will break thy heart, he will shatter its chords, he will trample out from its delicate framework every sound that now makes musical the common air, and swells into unison with the harps of angels.

"She has before written to me," continued Audley, pacing the room with angry, disordered strides, "asking me when our marriage can be proclaimed, and I thought my replies would have satisfied any reasonable woman. But now, now this is worse, immeasurably worse,—she actually doubts my honour! I, who have made such sacrifices,—actually doubts whether I, Audley Egerton, an English gentleman, could have been base enough to —"

"What?" interrupted Levy, "to deceive your friend L'Estrange? Did not she know *that*?"

"Sir!" exclaimed Egerton, turning white.

"Don't be angry,—all's fair in love as in war; and L'Estrange will live yet to thank you for saving him from such a *mésalliance*. But you are seriously angry: pray, forgive me."

With some difficulty and much fawning, the usurer appeased the storm he had raised in Audley's conscience. And he then heard, as if with surprise, the true purport of Nora's letter.

"It is beneath me to answer, much less to satisfy, such a doubt," said Audley. "I could have seen her, and a look of reproach would have sufficed; but to put my hand to paper, and condescend to write, 'I am not a villain, and I will give you the proofs that I am not' — never!"

"You are quite right; but let us see if we cannot reconcile matters between your pride and her feelings. Write simply this: 'All that you ask me to say or to explain, I have instructed Levy, as my solicitor, to say and explain for me; and you may believe him as you would myself.'"

"Well, the poor fool, she deserves to be punished; and I suppose that answer will punish her more than a lengthier rebuke. My mind is so distracted, I cannot judge of these trumpery woman-fears and whims; there, I have written as you suggest. Give her all the proof she needs, and tell her that in six months at furthest, come what will, she shall bear the name of Egerton, as henceforth she must share his fate."

"Why say six months?"

"Parliament must be dissolved, and there must be a general election before then. I shall either obtain a seat, be secure from a jail, have won field for my energies, or —"

"Or what?"

"I shall renounce ambition altogether, ask my brother to assist me towards whatever debts remain when all my property is fairly sold — they cannot be much. He has a living in his gift; the incumbent is old, and, I hear, very ill. I can take orders."

"Sink into a country parson!"

"And learn content. I have tasted it already. She was *then* by my side. Explain all to her. This letter, I fear, is too unkind — But to doubt me thus!"

Levy hastily placed the letter in his pocketbook; and, for fear it should be withdrawn, took his leave.

And of that letter he made such use, that the day after he

had given it to Nora, she had left the house, the neighbourhood; fled, and not a trace! Of all the agonies in life, that which is most poignant and harrowing, that which for the time most annihilates reason, and leaves our whole organization one lacerated, mangled *heart*, is the conviction that we have been deceived where we placed all the trust of love. The moment the anchor snaps, the storm comes on, the stars vanish behind the cloud.

When Levy returned, filled with the infamous hope which had stimulated his revenge,—the hope that if he could succeed in changing into scorn and indignation Nora's love for Audley, he might succeed also in replacing that broken and degraded idol,—his amaze and dismay were great on hearing of her departure. For several days he sought her traces in vain. He went to Lady Jane Horton's,—Nora had not been there. He trembled to go back to Egerton. Surely Nora would have written to her husband, and in spite of her promise, revealed his own falsehood; but as days passed, and not a clew was found, he had no option but to repair to Egerton Hall, taking care that the bailiffs still surrounded it. Audley had received no line from Nora. The young husband was surprised, perplexed, uneasy, but had no suspicion of the truth.

At length Levy was forced to break to Audley the intelligence of Nora's flight. He gave his own colour to it. Doubtless she had gone to seek her own relations, and, by their advice, take steps to make her marriage publicly known. This idea changed Audley's first shock into deep and stern resentment. His mind so little comprehended Nora's, and was ever so disposed to what is called the common-sense view of things, that he saw no other mode to account for her flight and her silence. Odious to Egerton as such a proceeding would be, he was far too proud to take any steps to guard against it. "Let her do her worst," said he, coldly, masking emotion with his usual self-command; "it will be but a nine days' wonder to the world, a fiercer rush of my creditors on their hunted prey —"

"And a challenge from Lord L'Estrange."

"So be it," answered Egerton, suddenly placing his hand at his heart.

"What is the matter? Are you ill?"

"A strange sensation here. My father died of a complaint of the heart, and I myself was once told to guard, through life, against excess of emotion. I smiled at such a warning then. Let us sit down to business."

But when Levy had gone, and solitude reclosed round that Man of the Iron Mask, there grew upon him more and more the sense of a mighty loss. Nora's sweet loving face started from the shadows of the forlorn walls. Her docile, yielding temper, her generous, self-immolating spirit, came back to his memory, to refute the idea that wronged her. His love, that had been suspended for awhile by busy cares, but which, if without much refining sentiment, was still the master passion of his soul, flowed back into all his thoughts,—circumfused the very atmosphere with a fearful, softening charm. He escaped under cover of the night from the watch of the bailiffs. He arrived in London. He himself sought everywhere he could think of for his missing bride. Lady Jane Horton was confined to her bed, dying fast, incapable even to receive and reply to his letter. He secretly sent down to Lansmere to ascertain if Nora had gone to her parents. She was not there. The Avenels believed her still with Lady Jane Horton.

He now grew most seriously alarmed; and in the midst of that alarm, Levy secretly contrived that he should be arrested for debt; but he was not detained in confinement many days. Before the disgrace got wind, the writs were discharged, Levy baffled. He was free. Lord L'Estrange had learned from Audley's servant what Audley would have concealed from him out of all the world. And the generous boy, who, besides the munificent allowance he received from the earl, was heir to an independent and considerable fortune of his own, when he should attain his majority, hastened to borrow the money and discharge all the obligations of his friend. The benefit was conferred before Audley knew of it, or could prevent. Then a new emotion, and perhaps scarce less stinging than the loss

of Nora, tortured the man who had smiled at the warning of science; and the strange sensation at the heart was felt again and again.

And Harley, too, was still in search of Nora,—would talk of nothing but her, and looked so haggard and grief-worn. The bloom of the boy's youth was gone. Could Audley then have said, "She you seek is another's; your love is razed out of your life; and, for consolation, learn that your friend has betrayed you"? Could Audley say this? He did not dare. Which of the two suffered the most?

And these two friends, of characters so different, were so singularly attached to each other,—inseparable at school, thrown together in the world, with a wealth of frank confidences between them, accumulated since childhood. And now, in the midst of all his own anxious sorrow, Harley still thought and planned for Egerton. And self-accusing remorse, and all the sense of painful gratitude, deepened Audley's affection for Harley into a devotion as to a superior, while softening it into a reverential pity that yearned to relieve, to atone; but how,—oh, how?

A general election was now at hand, still no news of Nora. Levy kept aloof from Audley, pursuing his own silent search. A seat for the borough of Lansmere was pressed upon Audley, not only by Harley, but his parents, especially by the countess, who tacitly ascribed to Audley's wise counsels Nora's mysterious disappearance.

Egerton at first resisted the thought of a new obligation to his injured friend; but he burned to have it, some day, in his power to repay at least his pecuniary debt: the sense of that debt humbled him more than all else. Parliamentary success might at last obtain for him some lucrative situation abroad, and thus enable him gradually to remove this load from his heart and his honour. No other chance of repayment appeared open to him. He accepted the offer, and went down to Lansmere. His brother, lately married, was asked to meet him; and there also was Miss Leslie the heiress, whom Lady Lansmere secretly hoped her son Harley would admire, but

who had long since, no less secretly, given her heart to the unconscious Egerton.

Meanwhile, the miserable Nora — deceived by the arts and representations of Levy, acting on the natural impulse of a heart so susceptible to shame, flying from a home which she deemed dishonoured, flying from a lover whose power over her she knew to be so great that she dreaded lest he might reconcile her to dishonour itself — had no thought save to hide herself forever from Audley's eye. She would not go to her relations, to Lady Jane; that were to give the clew, and invite the pursuit. An Italian lady of high rank had visited at Lady Jane's, — taken a great fancy to Nora; and the lady's husband, having been obliged to precede her return to Italy, had suggested the notion of engaging some companion; the lady had spoken of this to Nora and to Lady Jane Horton, who had urged Nora to accept the offer, elude Harley's pursuit, and go abroad for a time. Nora then had refused; for she then had seen Audley Egerton.

To this Italian lady she now went, and the offer was renewed with the most winning kindness, and grasped at in the passion of despair. But the Italian had accepted invitations to English country-houses before she finally departed for the Continent. Meanwhile Nora took refuge in a quiet lodging in a sequestered suburb, which an English servant in the employment of the fair foreigner recommended. Thus had she first come to the cottage in which Burley died. Shortly afterwards she left England with her new companion, unknown to all, — to Lady Jane as to her parents.

All this time the poor girl was under a moral delirium, a confused fever, haunted by dreams from which she sought to fly. Sound physiologists agree that madness is rarest amongst persons of the finest imagination. But those persons are, of all others, liable to a temporary state of mind in which judgment sleeps, — imagination alone prevails with a dire and awful tyranny. A single idea gains ascendancy, expels all others, presents itself everywhere with an intolerable blinding glare. Nora was at that time under the dread one idea, — to fly from shame!

But when the seas rolled, and the dreary leagues interposed between her and her lover; when new images presented themselves; when the fever slaked, and reason returned,—doubt broke upon the previous despair. Had she not been too credulous, too hasty? Fool, fool! Audley have been so poor a traitor! How guilty was she, if she had wronged him! And in the midst of this revulsion of feeling, there stirred within her another life. She was destined to become a mother. At that thought her high nature bowed; the last struggle of pride gave way; she would return to England, see Audley, learn from his lips the truth, and even if the truth were what she had been taught to believe, plead not for herself, but for the false one's child.

Some delay occurred in the then warlike state of affairs on the Continent before she could put this purpose into execution; and on her journey back, various obstructions lengthened the way. But she returned at last, and resought the suburban cottage in which she had last lodged before quitting England. At night, she went to Audley's London house; there was only a woman in charge of it. Mr. Egerton was absent,—electioneering somewhere; Mr. Levy, his lawyer, called every day for any letters to be forwarded to him. Nora shrank from seeing Levy, shrank from writing even a letter that would pass through his hands. If she had been deceived, it had been by him; and wilfully. But parliament was already dissolved; the election would soon be over. Mr. Egerton was expected to return to town within a week. Nora went back to Mrs. Goodyer's and resolved to wait, devouring her own heart in silence. But the newspapers might inform her where Audley really was; the newspapers were sent for and conned daily.

And one morning this paragraph met her eye:—

The Earl and Countess of Lansmere are receiving a distinguished party at their country seat. Among the guests is Miss Leslie, whose wealth and beauty have excited such sensation in the fashionable world. To the disappointment of numerous aspirants amongst our aristocracy, we hear that this lady has, however, made her distinguished choice in Mr. Audley Egerton. That gentleman is now a candidate for the

borough of Lansmere, as a supporter of the Government ; his success is considered certain, and, according to the report of a large circle of friends, few new members will prove so valuable an addition to the ministerial ranks. A great career may indeed be predicted for a young man so esteemed for talent and character, aided by a fortune so immense as that which he will shortly receive with the hand of the accomplished heiress.

Again the anchor snapped, again the storm descended, again the stars vanished. Nora was now once more under the dominion of a single thought, as she had been when she fled from her bridal home. Then, it was to escape from her lover,—now, it was to see him. As the victim stretched on the rack implores to be led at once to death, so there are moments when the annihilation of hope seems more merciful than the torment of suspense.



CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN the scenes in some long diorama pass solemnly before us, there is sometimes one solitary object, contrasting, perhaps, the view of stately cities or the march of a mighty river, that halts on the eye for a moment, and then glides away, leaving on the mind a strange, comfortless, undefined impression.

Why was the object presented to us? In itself it seemed comparatively insignificant. It may have been but a broken column, a lonely pool with a star-beam on its quiet surface,—yet it awes us. We remember it when phantasmal pictures of bright Damascus, or of colossal pyramids, of bazaars in Stamboul, or lengthened caravans that defile slow amidst the sands of Araby, have sated the wondering gaze. Why were we detained in the shadowy procession by a thing that would have been so commonplace had it not been so lone? Some latent interest must attach to it. Was it there that a vision of woe had lifted the wild hair of a Prophet; there where some Hagar had stilled the wail of her child on her indignant

breast? We would fain call back the pageantry procession,—fain see again the solitary thing that seemed so little worth the hand of the artist, and ask, “Why art thou here, and wherefore dost thou haunt us?”

Rise up,—rise up once more, by the broad great thoroughfare that stretches onward and onward to the remorseless London! Rise up, rise up, O solitary tree with the green leaves on thy bough, and the deep rents in thy heart; and the ravens, dark birds of omen and sorrow, that build their nest amidst the leaves of the bough, and drop with noiseless plumes down through the hollow rents of the heart, or are heard, it may be in the growing shadows of twilight, calling out to their young.

Under the old pollard-tree, by the side of John Avenel's house, there cowered, breathless and listening, John Avenel's daughter Nora. Now, when that fatal newspaper paragraph, which lied so like truth, met her eyes, she obeyed the first impulse of her passionate heart,—she tore the wedding ring from her finger, she enclosed it, with the paragraph itself, in a letter to Audley,—a letter that she designed to convey scorn and pride—alas! it expressed only jealousy and love. She could not rest till she had put this letter into the post with her own hand, addressed to Audley at Lord Lansmere's. Scarce had it left her ere she repented. What had she done,—resigned the birth-right of the child she was so soon to bring into the world, resigned her last hope in her lover's honour, given up her life of life—and from belief in what?—a report in a newspaper! No, no; she would go herself to Lansmere; to her father's home,—she could contrive to see Audley before that letter reached his hand. The thought was scarcely conceived before obeyed. She found a vacant place in a coach that started from London some hours before the mail, and went within a few miles of Lansmere; those last miles she travelled on foot. Exhausted, fainting, she gained at last the sight of home, and there halted, for in the little garden in front she saw her parents seated. She heard the murmur of their voices, and suddenly she remembered her altered shape, her terrible secret. How answer the question,

"Daughter, where and who is thy husband?" Her heart failed her; she crept under the old pollard-tree, to gather up resolve, to watch, and to listen. She saw the rigid face of the thrifty, prudent mother, with the deep lines that told of the cares of an anxious life, and the chafe of excitable temper and warm affections against the restraint of decorous sanctimony and resolute pride. The dear stern face never seemed to her more dear and more stern. She saw the comely, easy, indolent, good-humoured father; not then the poor, paralytic sufferer, who could yet recognize Nora's eyes under the lids of Leonard, but stalwart and jovial,—first bat in the Cricket Club, first voice in the Glee Society, the most popular canvasser of the Lansmere Constitutional True Blue Party, and the pride and idol of the Calvinistical prim wife; never from those pinched lips of hers had come forth even one pious rebuke to the careless, social man. As he sat, one hand in his vest, his profile turned to the road, the light smoke curling playfully up from the pipe, over which lips, accustomed to bland smile and hearty laughter, closed as if reluctant to be closed at all, he was the very model of the respectable retired trader in easy circumstances, and released from the toil of making money while life could yet enjoy the delight of spending it.

"Well, old woman," said John Avenel, "I must be off presently to see to those three shaky voters in Fish Lane; they will have done their work soon, and I shall catch 'em at home. They do say as how we may have an opposition; and I know that old Smikes has gone to Lonnon in search of a candidate. We can't have the Lansmere Constitutional Blues beat by a Lonnoner! Ha, ha, ha!"

"But you will be home before Jane and her husband Mark come? How ever she could marry a common carpenter!"

"Yes," said John, "he is a carpenter; but he has a vote, and that strengthens the family interest. If Dick was not gone to Amerikay, there would be three on us. But Mark is a real good Blue! A Lonnoner; indeed! a Yellow from Lonnon beat my Lord and the Blues! Ha, ha!"

"But, John, this Mr. Egerton is a Lonnoner!"

"You don't understand things, talking such nonsense. Mr. Egerton is the Blue candidate, and the Blues are the Country Party; therefore how can he be a Lonnoner? An uncommon clever, well-grown, handsome young man, eh! and my young Lord's particular friend."

Mrs. Avenel sighed.

"What are you sighing and shaking your head for?"

"I was thinking of our poor, dear, dear Nora!"

"God bless her!" cried John, heartily.

There was a rustle under the boughs of the old hollow-hearted pollard-tree.

"Ha, ha! Hark! I said that so loud that I have startled the ravens!"

"How he did love her!" said Mrs. Avenel, thoughtfully.

"I am sure he did; and no wonder, for she looks every inch a lady; and why should not she be my lady, after all?"

"He? Who? Oh, that foolish fancy of yours about my young Lord? A prudent woman like you! — stuff! I am glad my little beauty is gone to Lonnon, out of harm's way."

"John, John, John! No harm could ever come to my Nora. She's too pure and too good, and has too proper a pride in her; to —"

"To listen to any young lords, I hope," said John; "though," he added, after a pause, "she might well be a lady too. My Lord, the young one, took me by the hand so kindly the other day, and said, 'Have not you heard from her — I mean Miss Avenel — lately?' and those bright eyes of his were as full of tears as — as — as yours are now."

"Well, John, well; go on."

"That is all. My Lady came up, and took me away to talk about the election; and just as I was going, she whispered, 'Don't let my wild boy talk to you about that sweet girl of yours. We must both see that she does not come to disgrace.' 'Disgrace!' that word made me very angry for the moment. But my Lady has such a way with her that she soon put me right again. Yet, I do think Nora must have loved my young Lord, only she was too good to show it. What do you say?" And the father's voice was thoughtful.

"I hope she'll never love any man till she's married to him; it is not proper, John," said Mrs. Avenel, somewhat starchy, though very mildly.

"Ha, ha!" laughed John, chucking his prim wife under the chin, "you did not say that to me when I stole your first kiss under that very pollard-tree — no house near it then!"

"Hush, John, hush!" and the prim wife blushed like a girl.

"Pooh," continued John, merrily, "I don't see why we plain folk should pretend to be more saintly and prudish-like than our betters. There's that handsome Miss Leslie, who is to marry Mr. Egerton — easy enough to see how much she is in love with him, — could not keep her eyes off from him even in church, old girl! Ha, ha! What the deuce is the matter with the ravens?"

"They'll be a comely couple, John. And I hear tell she has a power of money. When is the marriage to be?"

"Oh, they say as soon as the election is over. A fine wedding we shall have of it! I dare say my young Lord will be bridesman. We'll send for our little Nora to see the gay doings!"

Out from the boughs of the old tree came the shriek of a lost spirit, — one of those strange, appalling sounds of human agony which, once heard, are never forgotten. It is as the wail of Hope, when SHE, too, rushes forth from the Coffin of Woes, and vanishes into viewless space; it is the dread cry of Reason parting from clay, and of Soul, that would wrench itself from life! For a moment all was still — and then a dull, dumb, heavy fall!

The parents gazed on each other, speechless: they stole close to the pales, and looked over. Under the boughs, at the gnarled roots of the oak, they saw — gray and indistinct — a prostrate form. John opened the gate, and went round; the mother crept to the road-side, and there stood still.

"Oh, wife, wife!" cried John Avenel, from under the green boughs, "it is our child Nora! Our child! our child!"

And, as he spoke, out from the green boughs started the



MR. AND MRS. AVENEL STARTLED BY THE CRY FROM THE OLD TREE.

dark ravens, wheeling round and round, and calling to their young!

And when they had laid her on the bed, Mrs. Avenel whispered John to withdraw for a moment; and with set lips but trembling hands began to unlace the dress, under the pressure of which Nora's heart heaved convulsively. And John went out of the room bewildered, and sat himself down on the landing-place, and wondered whether he was awake or sleeping; and a cold numbness crept over one side of him, and his head felt very heavy, with a loud, booming noise in his ears. Suddenly his wife stood by his side, and said, in a very low voice,—

"John, run for Mr. Morgan,—make haste. But mind—don't speak to any one on the way. Quick, quick!"

"Is she dying?"

"I don't know. Why not die before?" said Mrs. Avenel, between her teeth; "but Mr. Morgan is a discreet, friendly man."

"A true Blue!" muttered poor John, as if his mind wandered; and rising with difficulty, he stared at his wife a moment, shook his head, and was gone.

An hour or two later, a little, covered, taxed cart stopped at Mr. Avenel's cottage, out of which stepped a young man with pale face and spare form, dressed in the Sunday suit of a rustic craftsman; then a homely, but pleasant, honest face bent down to him, smilingly; and two arms emerging from under covert of a red cloak extended an infant, which the young man took tenderly. The baby was cross and very sickly; it began to cry. The father hushed, and rocked, and tossed it, with the air of one to whom such a charge was familiar.

"He'll be good when we get in, Mark," said the young woman, as she extracted from the depths of the cart a large basket containing poultry and home-made bread.

"Don't forget the flowers that the squire's gardener gave us," said Mark the Poet.

Without aid from her husband, the wife took down basket

and nosegay, settled her cloak, smoothed her gown, and said, "Very odd! they don't seem to expect us, Mark. How still the house is! Go and knock; they can't ha' gone to bed yet."

Mark knocked at the door — no answer. A light passed rapidly across the windows on the upper floor, but still no one came to his summons. Mark knocked again. A gentleman dressed in clerical costume, now coming from Lansmere Park, on the opposite side of the road, paused at the sound of Mark's second and more impatient knock, and said civilly, —

"Are you not the young folks my friend John Avenel told me this morning he expected to visit him?"

"Yes, please, Mr. Dale," said Mrs. Fairfield, dropping her courtesy. "You remember me! and this is my dear good man!"

"What! Mark the Poet?" said the curate of Lansmere, with a smile. "Come to write squibs for the election?"

"Squibs, sir!" cried Mark, indignantly.

"Burns wrote squibs," said the curate, mildly.

Mark made no answer, but again knocked at the door.

This time, a man, whose face, even seen by the starlight, was much flushed, presented himself at the threshold.

"Mr. Morgan!" exclaimed the curate, in benevolent alarm; "no illness here, I hope?"

"Cott! it is you, Mr. Dale! — Come in, come in; I want a word with you. But who the teuce are these people?"

"Sir," said Mark, pushing through the doorway, "my name is Fairfield, and my wife is Mr. Avenel's daughter!"

"Oh, Jane — and her baby too! — Cood! cood! Come in; but be quiet, can't you? Still, still — still as death!"

The party entered, the door closed; the moon rose, and shone calmly on the pale silent house, on the sleeping flowers of the little garden, on the old pollard with its hollow core. The horse in the taxed cart dozed unheeded; the light still at times flitted across the upper windows. These were the only signs of life, except when a bat, now and then attracted by the light that passed across the windows, brushed against the panes, and then, dipping downwards, struck up against the

nose of the slumbering horse, and darted merrily after the moth that fluttered round the raven's nest in the old pollard.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALL that day Harley L'Estrange had been more than usually mournful and dejected. Indeed, the return to scenes associated with Nora's presence increased the gloom that had settled on his mind since he had lost sight and trace of her. Audley, in the remorseful tenderness he felt for his injured friend, had induced L'Estrange towards evening to leave the Park, and go into a district some miles off, on pretence that he required Harley's aid there to canvass certain important outvoters: the change of scene might rouse him from his reveries. Harley himself was glad to escape from the guests at Lansmere. He readily consented to go. He would not return that night. The outvoters lay remote and scattered,—he might be absent for a day or two. When Harley was gone, Egerton himself sank into deep thought. There was rumour of some unexpected opposition. His partisans were alarmed and anxious. It was clear that the Lansmere interest, if attacked, was weaker than the earl would believe; Egerton might lose his election. If so, what would become of him? How support his wife, whose return to him he always counted on, and whom it would then become him at all hazards to acknowledge? It was that day that he had spoken to William Hazeldean as to the family living. — "Peace, at least," thought the ambitious man, — "I shall have peace!" And the squire had promised him the rectory if needed; not without a secret pang, for his Harry was already using her conjugal influence in favour of her old school-friend's husband, Mr. Dale; and the squire thought Audley would be but a poor country parson, and Dale — if he would only grow a little plumper than his curacy would permit him to be —

would be a parson in ten thousand. But while Audley thus prepared for the worst, he still brought his energies to bear on the more brilliant option; and sat with his Committee, looking into canvass-books, and discussing the characters, politics, and local interests of every elector, until the night was well-nigh gone. When he gained his room, the shutters were unclosed, and he stood a few moments at the window, gazing on the moon. At that sight, the thought of Nora, lost and afar, stole over him. The man, as we know, had in his nature little of romance and sentiment. Seldom was it his wont to gaze upon moon or stars. But whenever some whisper of romance did soften his hard, strong mind, or whenever moon or stars did charm his gaze from earth, Nora's bright Muse-like face, Nora's sweet loving eyes, were seen in moon and star-beam, Nora's low tender voice heard in the whisper of that which we call romance, and which is but the sound of the mysterious poetry that is ever in the air, would we but deign to hear it! He turned with a sigh, undressed, threw himself on his bed, and extinguished his light. But the light of the moon *would* fill the room. It kept him awake for a little time; he turned his face from the calm, heavenly beam resolutely towards the dull blind wall, and fell asleep. And, in the sleep, he was with Nora,—again in the humble bridal-home. Never in his dreams had she seemed to him so distinct and life-like,—her eyes upturned to his, her hands clasped together, and resting on his shoulder, as had been her graceful wont, her voice murmuring meekly, "Has it, then, been my fault that we parted? Forgive, forgive me!"

And the sleeper imagined that he answered, "Never part from me again,—never, never!" and that he bent down to kiss the chaste lips that so tenderly sought his own. And suddenly he heard a knocking sound, as of a hammer,—regular, but soft, low, subdued. Did you ever, O reader, hear the sound of the hammer on the lid of a coffin in a house of woe,—when the undertaker's decorous hireling fears that the living may hear how he parts them from the dead? Such seemed the sound to Audley. The dream vanished abruptly. He woke, and again heard the knock; it was at his door. He

sat up wistfully; the moon was gone, it was morning. "Who is there?" he cried peevishly.

A low voice from without answered, "Hush, it is I; dress quick; let me see you."

Egerton recognized Lady Lansmere's voice. Alarmed and surprised, he rose, dressed in haste, and went to the door. Lady Lansmere was standing without, extremely pale. She put her finger to her lip, and beckoned him to follow her. He obeyed mechanically. They entered her dressing-room, a few doors from his own chamber, and the countess closed the door.

Then laying her slight firm hand on his shoulder, she said, in suppressed and passionate excitement,—

"Oh, Mr. Egerton, you must serve me, and at once. Harley! Harley! save my Harley! Go to him, prevent his coming back here, stay with him; give up the election,—it is but a year or two lost in your life, you will have other opportunities; make that sacrifice to your friend."

"Speak — what is the matter? I can make no sacrifice too great for Harley!"

"Thanks, I was sure of it. Go then, I say, at once to Harley; keep him away from Lansmere on any excuse you can invent, until you can break the sad news to him,—gently, gently. Oh, how will he bear it; how recover the shock? My boy, my boy!"

"Calm yourself! Explain! Break what news; recover what shock?"

"True; you do not know, you have not heard. Nora Avenel lies yonder, in her father's house,—dead, dead!"

Audley staggered back, clapping his hand to his heart, and then dropping on his knee as if bowed down by the stroke of heaven.

"My bride, my wife!" he muttered. "Dead — it cannot be!"

Lady Lansmere was so startled at this exclamation, so stunned by a confession wholly unexpected, that she remained unable to soothe, to explain, and utterly unprepared for the fierce agony that burst from the man she had ever seen

so dignified and cold, when he sprang to his feet, and all the sense of his eternal loss rushed upon his heart.

At length he crushed back his emotions, and listened in apparent calm, and in a silence broken but by quick gasps for breath, to Lady Lansmere's account.

One of the guests in the house, a female relation of Lady Lansmere's, had been taken suddenly ill about an hour or two before; the house had been disturbed, the countess herself aroused, and Mr. Morgan summoned as the family medical practitioner. From him she had learned that Nora Avenel had returned to her father's house late on the previous evening, had been seized with brain fever, and died in a few hours.

Audley listened, and turned to the door, still in silence.

Lady Lansmere caught him by the arm. "Where are you going? Ah, can I now ask you to save my son from the awful news, you yourself the sufferer? And yet — yet — you know his haste, his vehemence, if he learned that you were his rival, her husband; you whom he so trusted! What, what would be the result? — I tremble!"

"Tremble not, — I do not tremble! Let me go! I will be back soon, and then," — (his lips writhed) — "*then* we will talk of Harley."

Egerton went forth, stunned and dizzy. Mechanically he took his way across the park to John Avenel's house. He had been forced to enter that house, formally, a day or two before, in the course of his canvass; and his worldly pride had received a shock when the home, the birth, and the manners of his bride's parents had been brought before him. He had even said to himself, "And is it the child of these persons that I, Audley Egerton, must announce to the world as wife?" Now, if she had been the child of a beggar — nay, of a felon — *now* if he could but recall her to life, how small and mean would all that dreaded world appear to him! Too late, too late! The dews were glistening in the sun, the birds were singing overhead, life wakening all around him — and his own heart felt like a charnel-house. Nothing but death and the dead there, — nothing! He arrived at the door: it

was open: he called; no one answered: he walked up the narrow stairs, undisturbed, unseen; he came into the chamber of death. At the opposite side of the bed was seated John Avenel; but he seemed in a heavy sleep. In fact, paralysis had smitten him; but he knew it not; neither did any one. Who could heed the strong hearty man in such a moment? Not even the poor anxious wife! He had been left there to guard the house, and watch the dead,—an unconscious man; numbed, himself, by the invisible icy hand! Audley stole to the bedside; he lifted the coverlid thrown over the pale still face. What passed within him during the minute he stayed there who shall say? But when he left the room, and slowly descended the stairs, he left behind him love and youth, all the sweet hopes and joys of the household human life, for ever and ever!

He returned to Lady Lansmere, who awaited his coming with the most nervous anxiety.

“Now,” said he, dryly, “I will go to Harley, and I will prevent his returning hither.”

“You have seen the parents. Good heavens! do they know of your marriage?”

“No; to Harley I must own it first. Meanwhile, silence!”

“Silence!” echoed Lady Lansmere; and her burning hand rested in Audley’s, and Audley’s hand was as ice.

In another hour Egerton had left the house, and before noon he was with Harley.

It is necessary now to explain the absence of all the Avenel family, except the poor stricken father.

Nora had died in giving birth to a child,—died delirious. In her delirium she had spoken of shame, of disgrace; there was no holy nuptial ring on her finger. Through all her grief, the first thought of Mrs. Avenel was to save the good name of her lost daughter, the unblemished honour of all the living Avenels. No matron long descended from knights or kings had keener pride in name and character than the poor, punctilious Calvinistic trader’s wife. “Sorrow later, honour now!” With hard dry eyes she mused and mused, and made out her

plan. Jane Fairfield should take away the infant at once, before the day dawned, and nurse it with her own. Mark should go with her, for Mrs. Avenel dreaded the indiscretion of his wild grief. She would go with them herself part of the way, in order to command or reason them into guarded silence. But they could not go back to Hazeldean with another infant; Jane must go where none knew her; the two infants might pass as twins. And Mrs. Avenel, though naturally a humane, kindly woman, and with a mother's heart to infants, looked with almost a glad sternness at Jane's puny babe, and thought to herself, "All difficulty would be over should there be only *one*! Nora's child could thus pass throughout life for Jane's!"

Fortunately for the preservation of the secret, the Avenels kept no servant,—only an occasional drudge, who came a few hours in the day, and went home to sleep. Mrs. Avenel could count on Mr. Morgan's silence as to the true cause of Nora's death. And Mr. Dale, why should he reveal the dishonour of a family? That very day, or the next at furthest, she could induce her husband to absent himself, lest he should blab out the tale while his sorrow was greater than his pride. She alone would then stay in the house of death until she could feel assured that all else were hushed into prudence. Ay, she felt, that with due precautions, the *name* was still safe. And so she awed and hurried Mark and his wife away, and went with them in the covered cart, that hid the faces of all three, leaving for an hour or two the house and the dead to her husband's charge, with many an admonition, to which he nodded his head, and which he did not hear. Do you think this woman was unfeeling and inhuman? Had Nora looked from heaven into her mother's heart Nora would not have thought so. A good name when the burial stone closes over dust is still a possession upon the earth; on earth it is indeed our only one! Better for our friends to guard for us that treasure than to sit down and weep over perishable clay. And weep!—Oh, stern mother, long years were left to thee for weeping! No tears shed for Nora made such deep furrows on the cheeks as thine did! Yet who ever saw them flow?

Harley was in great surprise to see Egerton; more surprised when Egerton told him that he found he was to be opposed,—that he had no chance of success at Lansmere, and had, therefore, resolved to retire from the contest. He wrote to the earl to that effect; but the countess knew the true cause, and hinted it to the earl; so that, as we saw at the commencement of this history, Egerton's cause did not suffer when Captain Dashmore appeared in the borough; and, thanks to Mr. Hazeldean's exertions and oratory, Audley came in by two votes,—the votes of John Avenel and Mark Fairfield. For though the former had been removed a little way from the town, and by medical advice, and though, on other matters, the disease that had smitten him left him docile as a child (and he had but vague indistinct ideas of all the circumstances connected with Nora's return, save the sense of her loss), yet he still would hear how the Blues went on, and would get out of bed to keep his word: and even his wife said, "He is right; better die of it than break his promise!" The crowd gave way as the broken man they had seen a few days before so jovial and healthful was brought up in a chair to the poll, and said, with his tremulous quavering voice, "I'm a true Blue,—Blue forever!"

Elections are wondrous things! No man who has not seen can guess how the zeal in them triumphs over sickness, sorrow, the ordinary private life of us!

There was forwarded to Audley, from Lansmere Park, Nora's last letter. The postman had left it there an hour or two after he himself had gone. The wedding-ring fell on the ground, and rolled under his feet. And those burning, passionate reproaches, all that anger of the wounded dove, explained to him the mystery of her return, her unjust suspicions, the cause of her sudden death, which he still ascribed to brain fever, brought on by excitement and fatigue. For Nora did not speak of the child about to be born; she had not remembered it when she wrote, or she would not have written. On the receipt of this letter, Egerton could not remain in the dull village district,—alone, too, with Harley. He said, abruptly, that he must go to London; prevailed on L'Estrange

to accompany him; and there, when he heard from Lady Lansmere that the funeral was over, he broke to Harley, with lips as white as the dead, and his hand pressed to his heart, on which his hereditary disease was fastening quick and fierce, the dread truth that Nora was no more. The effect upon the boy's health and spirits was even more crushing than Audley could anticipate. He only woke from grief to feel remorse. "For," said the noble Harley, "had it not been for my passion, my rash pursuit, would she ever have left her safe asylum,—ever even have left her native town? And then—and then—the struggle between her sense of duty and her love to me! I see it all—all! But for me she were living still!"

"Oh, no!" cried Egerton, his confession now rushing to his lips. "Believe me, she never loved you as you think. Nay, nay, hear me! Rather suppose that she loved another, fled with him, was perhaps married to him, and—"

"Hold!" exclaimed Harley, with a terrible burst of passion,— "you kill her twice to me if you say that! I can still feel that she lives — lives here, in my heart — while I dream that she loved me — or, at least, that no other lip ever knew the kiss that was denied to mine! But if you tell me to doubt *that* — you — you —" The boy's anguish was too great for his frame; he fell suddenly back into Audley's arms; he had broken a blood-vessel. For several days he was in great danger; but his eyes were constantly fixed on Audley's, with wistful intense gaze. "Tell me," he muttered, at the risk of re-opening the ruptured veins, and of the instant loss of life, — "tell me, you did not mean *that*! Tell me you have no cause to think she loved another — *was* another's!"

"Hush, hush! no cause — none — none! I meant but to comfort you, as I thought, — fool that I was! — that is all!" cried the miserable friend. And from that hour Audley gave up the idea of righting himself in his own eyes, and submitted still to be the living lie, — he, the haughty gentleman!

Now, while Harley was still very weak and suffering, Mr. Dale came to London, and called on Egerton. The curate, in promising secrecy to Mrs. Avenel, had made one condition,

that it should not be to the positive injury of Nora's living son. What if Nora were married after all? And would it not be right, at least, to learn the name of the child's father? Some day he might need a father. Mrs. Avenel was obliged to content herself with these reservations. However, she implored Mr. Dale not to make inquiries. What could they do? If Nora were married, her husband would naturally, of his own accord, declare himself; if seduced and forsaken, it would but disgrace her memory (now saved from stain) to discover the father to a child of whose very existence the world as yet knew nothing. These arguments perplexed the good curate. But Jane Fairfield had a sanguine belief in her sister's innocence; and all her suspicions naturally pointed to Lord L'Estrange. So, indeed, perhaps, did Mrs. Avenel's, though she never owned them. Of the correctness of these suspicions Mr. Dale was fully convinced; the young lord's admiration, Lady Lansmere's fears, had been too evident to one who had often visited at the Park; Harley's abrupt departure just before Nora's return home; Egerton's sudden resignation of the borough before even opposition was declared, in order to rejoin his friend, the very day of Nora's death,—all confirmed his ideas that Harley was the betrayer or the husband. Perhaps there might have been a secret marriage—possibly abroad—since Harley wanted some years of his majority. He would; at least, try to see and to sound Lord L'Estrange. Prevented this interview by Harley's illness, the curate resolved to ascertain how far he could penetrate into the mystery by a conversation with Egerton. There was much in the grave repute which the latter had acquired, and the singular and pre-eminent character for truth and honour with which it was accompanied, that made the curate resolve upon this step. Accordingly, he saw Egerton, meaning only diplomatically to extract from the new member for Lansmere what might benefit the family of the voters who had given him his majority of two.

He began by mentioning, as a touching fact, how poor John Avenel, bowed down by the loss of his child and the malady which had crippled his limbs and enfeebled his mind, had

still risen from his bed to keep his word. And Audley's emotions seemed to him so earnest and genuine, to show so good a heart, that out by little and little came more: first, his suspicions that poor Nora had been betrayed; then his hopes that there might have been private marriage; and as Audley, with his iron self-command, showed just the proper degree of interest, and no more, he went on, till Audley knew that he had a child.

"Inquire no further!" said the man of the world. "Respect Mrs. Avenel's feelings and wishes, I entreat you; they are the right ones. Leave the rest to me. In my position — I mean as a resident of London — I can quietly and easily ascertain more than you could, and provoke no scandal! If I can right this — this — poor — [his voice trembled] — right the lost mother, or the living child, sooner or later you will hear from me; if not, bury this secret where it now rests, in a grave which slander has not reached. But the child — give me the address where it is to be found — in case I succeed in finding the father, and touching his heart."

"Oh, Mr. Egerton, may I not say where you may find that father — who he is?"

"Sir!"

"Do not be angry; and, after all, I cannot ask you to betray any confidence which a friend may have placed in you. I know what you men of high honour are to each other, — even in sin. No, no, I beg pardon; I leave all in your hands. I shall hear from you then?"

"Or if not, why, then, believe that all search is hopeless. My friend! if you mean Lord L'Estrange, he is innocent. I — I — I — [the voice faltered] — am convinced of it."

The curate sighed, but made no answer. "Oh, ye men of the world!" thought he. He gave the address which the member for Lansmere had asked for, and went his way, and never heard again from Audley Egerton. He was convinced that the man who had showed such deep feeling had failed in his appeal to Harley's conscience, or had judged it best to leave Nora's name in peace, and her child to her own relations and the care of Heaven.

Harley L'Estrange, scarcely yet recovered, hastened to join our armies on the Continent, and seek the Death which, like its half-brother, rarely comes when we call it.

As soon as Harley was gone, Egerton went to the village to which Mr. Dale had directed him, to seek for Nora's child. But here he was led into a mistake which materially affected the tenor of his own life, and Leonard's future destinies. Mrs. Fairfield had been naturally ordered by her mother to take another name in the village to which she had gone with the two infants, so that her connection with the Avenel family might not be traced, to the provocation of inquiry and gossip. The grief and excitement through which she had gone dried the source of nutriment in her breast. She put Nora's child out to nurse at the house of a small farmer, at a little distance from the village, and moved from her first lodging to be nearer to the infant. Her own child was so sickly and ailing, that she could not bear to intrust it to the care of another. She tried to bring it up by hand; and the poor child soon pined away and died. She and Mark could not endure the sight of their baby's grave; they hastened to return to Hazeldean, and took Leonard with them. From that time Leonard passed for the son they had lost.

When Egerton arrived at the village, and inquired for the person whose address had been given to him, he was referred to the cottage in which she had last lodged, and was told that she had been gone some days,—the day after her child was buried. Her child buried! Egerton stayed to inquire no more; thus he heard nothing of the infant that had been put out to nurse. He walked slowly into the churchyard, and stood for some minutes gazing on the small new mound; then, pressing his hand on the heart to which all emotion had been forbidden, he re-entered his chaise and returned to London. The sole reason for acknowledging his marriage seemed to him now removed. Nora's name had escaped reproach. Even had his painful position with regard to Harley not constrained him to preserve his secret, there was every motive to the world's wise and haughty son not to acknowledge a deroga-

tory and foolish marriage, now that none lived whom concealment could wrong.

Audley mechanically resumed his former life,—sought to resettle his thoughts on the grand objects of ambitious men. His poverty still pressed on him; his pecuniary debt to Harley stung and galled his peculiar sense of honour. He saw no way to clear his estates, to repay his friend, but by some rich alliance. Dead to love, he faced this prospect first with repugnance, then with apathetic indifference. Levy, of whose treachery towards himself and Nora he was unaware, still held over him the power that the money-lender never loses over the man that has owed, owes, or may owe again. Levy was ever urging him to propose to the rich Miss Leslie; Lady Lansmere, willing to atone, as she thought, for his domestic loss, urged the same; Harley, influenced by his mother, wrote from the Continent to the same effect.

“Manage it as you will,” at last said Egerton to Levy, “so that I am not a wife’s pensioner.”

“Propose for me, if you will,” he said to Lady Lansmere, — “I cannot woo,— I cannot talk of love.”

Somehow or other the marriage, with all its rich advantages to the ruined gentleman, was thus made up. And Egerton, as we have seen, was the polite and dignified husband before the world,—married to a woman who adored him. It is the common fate of men like him to be loved too well!

On her death-bed his heart was touched by his wife’s melancholy reproach,—“Nothing I could do has ever made you love me!” “It is true,” answered Audley, with tears in his voice and eyes; “Nature gave me but a small fund of what women like you call ‘love,’ and I lavished it all away.” And he then told her, though with reserve, some portion of his former history; and that soothed her; for when she saw that he had loved, and *could* grieve, she caught a glimpse of the human heart she *had* not seen before. She died, forgiving him, and blessing.

Audley’s spirits were much affected by this new loss. He inly resolved never to marry again. He had a vague thought at first of retrenching his expenditure, and making young

Randal Leslie his heir. But when he first saw the clever Eton boy, his feelings did not warm to him, though his intellect appreciated Randal's quick, keen talents. He contented himself with resolving to push the boy,—to do what was merely just to the distant kinsman of his late wife. Always careless and lavish in money matters, generous and princely, not from the delight of serving others, but from a *grand seigneur's* sentiment of what was due to himself and his station, Audley had a mournful excuse for the lordly waste of the large fortune at his control. The morbid functions of the heart had become organic disease. True, he might live many years, and die at last of some other complaint in the course of nature; but the progress of the disease would quicken with all emotional excitement; he might die suddenly — any day — in the very prime, and, seemingly, in the full vigour, of his life. And the only physician in whom he confided what he wished to keep concealed from the world (for ambitious men would fain be thought immortal) told him frankly that it was improbable that, with the wear and tear of political strife and action, he could advance far into middle age. Therefore, no son of his succeeding — his nearest relations all wealthy — Egerton resigned himself to his constitutional disdain of money; he could look into no affairs, provided the balance in his banker's hands were such as became the munificent commoner. All else he left to his steward and to Levy. Levy grew rapidly rich,—very, very rich,—and the steward thrived.

The usurer continued to possess a determined hold over the imperious great man. He knew Audley's secret; he could reveal that secret to Harley. And the one soft and tender side of the statesman's nature — the sole part of him not dipped in the ninefold Styx of practical prosaic life, which renders man so invulnerable to affection — was his remorseful love for the school friend whom he still deceived.

"Here then you have the key to the locked chambers of Audley Egerton's character, the fortified castle of his mind. The envied minister, the joyless man; the oracle on the economies of an empire, the prodigal in a usurer's hands; the

august, high-crested gentleman, to whom princes would refer for the casuistry of honour, the culprit trembling lest the friend he best loved on earth should detect his lie! Wrap thyself in the decent veil that the Arts or the Graces weave for thee, O Human Nature! It is only the statue of marble whose nakedness the eye can behold without shame and offence!

CHAPTER XIX.

OF the narrative just placed before the reader, it is clear that Leonard could gather only desultory fragments. He could but see that his ill-fated mother had been united to a man she had loved with surpassing tenderness; had been led to suspect that the marriage was fraudulent; had gone abroad in despair; returned repentant and hopeful; had gleaned some intelligence that her lover was about to be married to another, and there the manuscript closed with the blisters left on the page by agonizing tears. The mournful end of Nora, her lonely return to die under the roof of her parents,—this he had learned before from the narrative of Dr. Morgan.

But even the name of her supposed husband was not revealed. Of him Leonard could form no conjecture, except that he was evidently of higher rank than Nora. Harley L'Estrange seemed clearly indicated in the early boy-lover. If so, Harley must know all that was left dark to Leonard, and to him Leonard resolved to confide the manuscripts. With this resolution he left the cottage, resolving to return and attend the funeral obsequies of his departed friend. Mrs. Goodyer willingly permitted him to take away the papers she had lent to him, and added to them the packet which had been addressed to Mrs. Bertram from the Continent.

Musing in anxious gloom over the record he had read, Leonard entered London on foot, and bent his way towards

Harley's hotel; when, just as he had crossed into Bond Street, a gentleman in company with Baron Levy, and who seemed, by the flush on his brow and the sullen tone of his voice, to have had rather an irritating colloquy with the fashionable usurer, suddenly caught sight of Leonard, and, abruptly quitting Levy, seized the young man by the arm.

"Excuse me, sir," said the gentleman, looking hard into Leonard's face, "but unless these sharp eyes of mine are mistaken, which they seldom are, I see a nephew whom, perhaps, I behaved to rather too harshly, but who still has no right to forget Richard Avenel."

"My dear uncle," exclaimed Leonard, "this is indeed a joyful surprise; at a time, too, when I needed joy! No; I have never forgotten your kindness, and always regretted our estrangement."

"That is well said; give us your fist again. Let me look at you — quite the gentleman, I declare — still so good-looking too. We Avenels always were a handsome family. Good-by, Baron Levy. Need not wait for me; I am not going to run away. I shall see you again."

"But," whispered Levy, who had followed Avenel across the street, and eyed Leonard with a quick, curious, searching glance — "but it must be as I say with regard to the borough; or (to be plain) you must cash the bills on the day they are due."

"Very well, sir, very well. So you think to put the screw upon me, as if I were a poor little householder. I understand, — my money or my borough?"

"Exactly so," said the baron, with a soft smile.

"You shall hear from me." (Aside, as Levy strolled away) — "D—d tarnation rascal!"

Dick Avenel then linked his arm in his nephew's, and strove for some minutes to forget his own troubles, in the indulgence of that curiosity in the affairs of another, which was natural to him, and in this instance increased by the real affection which he had felt for Leonard. But still his curiosity remained unsatisfied; for long before Leonard could overcome his habitual reluctance to speak of his success in literature, Dick's mind

wandered back to his rival at Screwstown, and the curse of "over-competition," — to the bills which Levy had discounted, in order to enable Dick to meet the crushing force of a capitalist larger than himself, and the "tarnation rascal" who now wished to obtain two seats at Lansmere, one for Randal Leslie, one for a rich Nabob whom Levy had just caught as a client; and Dick, though willing to aid Leslie, had a mind to the other seat for himself. Therefore Dick soon broke in upon the hesitating confessions of Leonard, with exclamations far from pertinent to the subject, and rather for the sake of venting his own griefs and resentment than with any idea that the sympathy or advice of his nephew could serve him.

"Well, well," said Dick, "another time for your history. I see you have thrived, and that is enough for the present. Very odd; but just now I can only think of myself. I'm in a regular fix, sir. Screwstown is not the respectable Screwstown that you remember it — all demoralized and turned topsyturvy by a demoniacal monster capitalist, with steam-engines that might bring the falls of Niagara into your back parlour, sir! And as if that was not enough to destroy and drive into almighty shivers a decent fair-play Britisher like myself, I hear he is just in treaty for some patent infernal invention that will make his engines do twice as much work with half as many hands! That's the way those unfeeling ruffians increase our poor-rates! But I'll get up a riot against him, — I will! Don't talk to me of the law! What the devil is the good of the law if it don't protect a man's industry, — a *liberal* man, too, like me!" Here Dick burst into a storm of vituperation against the rotten old country in general, and Mr. Dyce, the monster capitalist of Screwstown, in particular.

Leonard started; for Dick now named, in that monster capitalist, the very person who was in treaty for Leonard's own mechanical improvement on the steam-engine.

"Stop, uncle, stop! Why, then, if this man were to buy the contrivance you speak of, it would injure you?"

"Injure me, sir! I should be a bankrupt, — that is, if it succeeded; but I dare say it is all a humbug."

"No, it *will* succeed, — I'll answer for that!"

"You! You have seen it?"

"Why, I invented it!"

Dick hastily withdrew his arm from Leonard's.

"Serpent's tooth!" he said falteringly, "so it is you, whom I warmed at my hearth, who are to ruin Richard Avenel?"

"No; but to save him! Come into the City and look at my model. If you like it, the patent shall be yours!"

"Cab, cab, cab," cried Dick Avenel, stopping a "Hansom;" "jump in, Leonard,—jump in. I'll buy your patent,—that is, if it be worth a straw; and as for payment —"

"Payment! Don't talk of that!"

"Well, I won't," said Dick, mildly; "for 't is not the topic of conversation I should choose myself, just at present. And as for that black-whiskered alligator, the baron, let me first get out of those rambustious, unchristian, filbert-shaped claws of his, and then — But jump in! jump in! and tell the man where to drive!"

A very brief inspection of Leonard's invention sufficed to show Richard Avenel how invaluable it would be to him. Armed with a patent, of which the certain effects in the increase of power and diminution of labour were obvious to any practical man, Avenel felt that he should have no difficulty in obtaining such advances of money as he required, whether to alter his engines, meet the bills discounted by Levy, or carry on the war with the monster capitalist. It might be necessary to admit into partnership some other monster capitalist — What then? Any partner better than Levy. A bright idea struck him.

"If I can just terrify and whop that infernal intruder on my own ground for a few months, he may offer, himself, to enter into partnership, — make the two concerns a joint-stock friendly combination, and then we shall flog the world."

His gratitude to Leonard became so lively that Dick offered to bring his nephew in for Lansmere instead of himself; and when Leonard declined the offer, exclaimed, "Well, then, any friend of yours; I'm all for reform against those high and mighty right honourable boroughmongers; and what with

loans and mortgages on the small householders, and a long course of 'Free and Easies' with the independent freemen, I carry one seat certain, perhaps both seats of the town of Lansmere, in my breeches pocket." Dick then, appointing an interview with Leonard at his lawyer's, to settle the transfer of the invention, upon terms which he declared "should be honourable to both parties," hurried off, to search amongst his friends in the City for some monster capitalist, who might be induced to extricate him from the jaws of Levy and the engines of his rival at Screwstown. "Mullins is the man, if I can but catch him," said Dick. "You have heard of Mullins? — a wonderful great man; you should see his nails; he never cuts them! Three millions, at least, he has scraped together with those nails of his, sir. And in this rotten old country, a man must have nails a yard long to fight with a devil like Levy! Good-by, good-by,—GOOD-BY, my DEAR nephew!"

CHAPTER XX.

HARLEY L'ESTRANGE was seated alone in his apartments. He had just put down a volume of some favourite classic author, and he was resting his hand firmly clenched upon the book. Ever since Harley's return to England, there had been a perceptible change in the expression of his countenance, even in the very bearing and attitudes of his elastic youthful figure. But this change had been more marked since that last interview with Helen which has been recorded. There was a compressed, resolute firmness in the lips, a decided character in the brow. To the indolent, careless grace of his movements had succeeded a certain indescribable energy, as quiet and self-collected as that which distinguished the determined air of Audley Egerton himself. In fact, if you could have looked into his heart, you would have seen that Harley was, for the first time, making a strong effort over his passions and his humours; that the whole man was nerving himself to

a sense of duty. "No," he muttered, — "no! I will think only of Helen; I will think only of real life! And what (were I not engaged to another) would that dark-eyed Italian girl be to me? — What a mere fool's fancy is this! I love again, — I, who through all the fair spring of my life have clung with such faith to a memory and a grave! Come, come, come, Harley L'Estrange, act thy part as man amongst men, at last! Accept regard; dream no more of passion. Abandon false ideals. Thou art no poet — why deem that life itself can be a poem?"

The door opened, and the Austrian prince, whom Harley had interested in the cause of Violante's father, entered, with the familiar step of a friend.

"Have you discovered those documents yet?" said the prince. "I must now return to Vienna within a few days; and unless you can arm me with some tangible proof of Peschiera's ancient treachery, or some more unanswerable excuse for his noble kinsman, I fear that there is no other hope for the exile's recall to his country than what lies in the hateful option of giving his daughter to his perfidious foe."

"Alas!" said Harley, "as yet all researches have been in vain; and I know not what other steps to take, without arousing Peschiera's vigilance, and setting his crafty brains at work to counteract us. My poor friend, then, must rest contented with exile. To give Violante to the count were dishonour. But I shall soon be married; soon have a home, not quite unworthy of their due rank, to offer both to father and to child."

"Would the future Lady L'Estrange feel no jealousy of a guest so fair as you tell me this young signorina is? And would you be in no danger yourself, my poor friend?"

"Pooh!" said Harley, colouring. "My fair guest would have *two* fathers; that is all. Pray do not jest on a thing so grave as honour."

Again the door opened, and Leonard appeared.

"Welcome," cried Harley, pleased to be no longer alone under the prince's penetrating eye, — "welcome. This is the noble friend who shares our interest for Riccabocca, and who

could serve him so well, if we could but discover the document of which I have spoken to you."

"It is here," said Leonard, simply; "may it be all that you require!"

Harley eagerly grasped at the packet, which had been sent from Italy to the supposed Mrs. Bertram, and, leaning his face on his hand, rapidly hurried through the contents.

"Hurrah!" he cried at last, with his face lighted up, and a boyish toss of his right hand. "Look, look, Prince, here are Peschiera's own letters to his kinsman's wife; his avowal of what he calls his 'patriotic designs;' his entreaties to her to induce her husband to share them. Look, look, how he wields his influence over the woman he had once wooed; look how artfully he combats her objections; see how reluctant our friend was to stir, till wife and kinsman both united to urge him!"

"It is enough,—quite enough," exclaimed the prince, looking at the passages in Peschiera's letters which Harley pointed out to him.

"No, it is not enough," shouted Harley, as he continued to read the letters with his rapid sparkling eyes. "More still! O villain, doubly damned! Here, after our friend's flight, here is Peschiera's avowal of guilty passion; here, he swears that he had intrigued to ruin his benefactor, in order to pollute the home that had sheltered him. Ah, see how she answers! thank Heaven her own eyes were opened at last, and she scorned him before she died! She was innocent! I said so. Violante's mother was pure. Poor lady, this moves me! Has your emperor the heart of a man?"

"I know enough of our emperor," answered the prince, warmly, "to know that, the moment these papers reach him, Peschiera is ruined, and your friend is restored to his honours. You will live to see the daughter, to whom you would have given a child's place at your hearth, the wealthiest heiress of Italy,—the bride of some noble lover, with rank only below the supremacy of kings!"

"Ah," said Harley, in a sharp accent, and turning very pale,— "ah, I shall not see her that! I shall never visit

Italy again! — never see her more, — never, after she has once quitted this climate of cold iron cares and formal duties! never, never!” He turned his head for a moment, and then came with quick step to Leonard. “But you, O happy poet! No Ideal can ever be lost to you. You are independent of real life. Would that I were a poet!” He smiled sadly.

“You would not say so, perhaps, my dear Lord,” answered Leonard, with equal sadness, “if you knew how little what you call ‘the Ideal’ replaces to a poet the loss of one affection in the genial human world. Independent of real life! Alas! no. And I have here the confessions of a true poet-soul, which I will entreat you to read at leisure; and when you have read, say if you would still be a poet!”

He took forth Nora’s manuscripts as he spoke.

“Place them yonder, in my *escritoire*, Leonard; I will read them later.”

“Do so, and with heed; for to me there is much here that involves my own life, — much that is still a mystery, and which I think you can unravel!”

“I!” exclaimed Harley; and he was moving towards the *escritoire*, in a drawer of which Leonard had carefully deposited the papers, when once more, but this time violently, the door was thrown open, and Giacomo rushed into the room, accompanied by Lady Lansmere.

“Oh, my Lord, my Lord!” cried Giacomo, in Italian, “the signorina! the signorina! Violante!”

“What of her? Mother, Mother! what of her? Speak, speak!”

“She has gone, — left our house!”

“Left! No, no!” cried Giacomo. “She must have been deceived or forced away. The count! the count! Oh, my good Lord, save her, as you once saved her father!”

“Hold!” cried Harley. “Give me your arm, Mother. A second such blow in life is beyond the strength of man, — at least it is beyond mine. So, so! I am better now! Thank you, Mother. Stand back, all of you! give me air. So the count has triumphed, and Violante has fled with him! Explain all, — I can bear it!”

BOOK TWELFTH.

INITIAL CHAPTER.

WHEREIN THE CAXTON FAMILY REAPPEAR.

"AGAIN," quoth my father,— "again behold us! We who greeted the commencement of your narrative, who absented ourselves in the midcourse when we could but obstruct the current of events, and jostle personages more important,— we now gather round the close. Still, as the chorus to the drama, we circle round the altar with the solemn but dubious chant which prepares the audience for the completion of the appointed destinies; though still, ourselves, unaware how the skein is to be unravelled, and where the shears are to descend."

So there they stood, the Family of Caxton,— all grouping round me, all eager officiously to question, some over-anxious prematurely to criticise.

"Violante can't have voluntarily gone off with that horrid count," said my mother; "but perhaps she was deceived, like Eugenia by Mr. Bellamy, in the novel of 'CAMILLA'."

"Ha!" said my father, "and in that case it is time yet to steal a hint from Clarissa Harlowe, and make Violante die less of a broken heart than a sullied honour. She is one of those girls who ought to be killed! All things about her forebode an early tomb!"

"Dear, dear!" cried Mrs. Caxton, "I hope not!"

"Pooh, brother," said the captain, "we have had enough of the tomb in the history of poor Nora. The whole story grows out of a grave, and if to a grave it must return — if, Pisistratus, you must kill somebody — kill Levy."

"Or the count," said my mother, with unusual truculence.

"Or Randal Leslie," said Squills. "I should like to have a *post-mortem* cast of his head,—it would be an instructive study."

Here there was a general confusion of tongues, all present conspiring to bewilder the unfortunate author with their various and discordant counsels how to wind up his story and dispose of his characters.

"Silence!" cried Pisistratus, clapping his hands to both ears. "I can no more alter the fate allotted to each of the personages whom you honour with your interest than I can change your own; like you, they must go where events lead them, urged on by their own characters and the agencies of others. Providence so pervadingly governs the universe, that you cannot strike it even out of a book. The author may beget a character, but the moment the character comes into action, it escapes from his hands,—plays its own part, and fulfils its own inevitable doom."

"Besides," said Squills, "it is easy to see, from the phrenological development of the organs in those several heads which Pisistratus has allowed us to examine, that we have seen no creations of mere fiction, but living persons, whose true history has set in movement their various bumps of Amativeness, Constructiveness, Acquisitiveness, Ideality, Wonder, Comparison, etc. They must act, and they must end, according to the influences of their crania. Thus we find in Randal Leslie the predominant organs of Constructiveness, Secretiveness, Comparison, and Eventuality, while Benevolence, Conscientiousness, Adhesiveness, are utterly *nil*. Now, to divine how such a man must end, we must first see what is the general composition of the society in which he moves,—in short, what other gases are brought into contact with his phlogiston. As to Leonard, and Harley, and Audley Egerton, surveying them phrenologically, I should say that —"

"Hush!" said my father, "Pisistratus has dipped his pen in the ink, and it seems to me easier for the wisest man that ever lived to account for what others have done than to predict what they should do. Phrenologists discovered that Mr.

Thurtell had a very fine organ of Conscientiousness; yet, somehow or other, that erring personage contrived to knock the brains out of his friend's organ of Individuality. Therefore I rise to propose a Resolution,—that this meeting be adjourned till Pisistratus has completed his narrative; and we shall then have the satisfaction of knowing that it ought, according to every principle of nature, science, and art, to have been completed differently. Why should we deprive ourselves of that pleasure?"

"I second the motion," said the captain; "but if Levy be not hanged, I shall say that there is an end of all poetical justice."

"Take care of poor Helen," said Blanche, tenderly: "not that I would have you forget Violante."

"Pish! and sit down, or they shall both die old maids."

Frightened at that threat, Blanche, with a deprecating look, drew her stool quietly near me, as if to place her two *protégés* in an atmosphere mesmerized to matrimonial attractions; and my mother set hard to work — at a new frock for the baby. Unsoftened by these undue female influences, Pisistratus wrote on at the dictation of the relentless Fates. His pen was of iron, and his heart was of granite. He was as insensible to the existence of wife and baby as if he had never paid a house bill, nor rushed from a nursery at the sound of an infant squall. O blessed privilege of Authorship!

"O testudinis aureæ
Dulcem quæ strepitum, Pieri, temperas!
O mutis quoque piscibus
Donatura cycni, si libeat, sonum!"¹

¹ "O Muse, who dost temper the sweet sound of the golden shell of the tortoise, and couldst also give, were it needed, to silent fishes the song of the swan."

CHAPTER II.

It is necessary to go somewhat back in the course of this narrative, and account to the reader for the disappearance of Violante.

It may be remembered that Peschiera, scared by the sudden approach of Lord L'Estrange, had little time for further words to the young Italian, than those which expressed his intention to renew the conference, and press for her decision. But the next day, when he re-entered the garden, secretly and stealthily, as before, Violante did not appear. And after watching round the precincts till dusk, the count retreated, with an indignant conviction that his arts had failed to enlist on his side either the heart or the imagination of his intended victim. He began now to revolve and to discuss with Levy the possibilities of one of those bold and violent measures, which were favoured by his reckless daring and desperate condition. But Levy treated with such just ridicule any suggestion to abstract Violante by force from Lord Lansmere's house, so scouted the notions of nocturnal assault, with the devices of scaling windows and rope-ladders, that the count reluctantly abandoned that romance of villany so unsuited to our sober capital, and which would no doubt have terminated in his capture by the police, with the prospect of committal to the House of Correction.

Levy himself found his invention at fault, and Randal Leslie was called into consultation. The usurer had contrived that Randal's schemes of fortune and advancement were so based upon Levy's aid and connivance, that the young man, with all his desire rather to make instruments of other men, than to be himself their instrument, found his superior intellect as completely a slave to Levy's more experienced craft, as ever subtle Genius of air was subject to the vulgar Sorcerer of earth.

His acquisition of the ancestral acres, his anticipated seat in parliament, his chance of ousting Frank from the heritage of Hazeldean, were all as strings that pulled him to and fro, like a puppet in the sleek, filbert-nailed fingers of the smiling showman, who could exhibit him to the admiration of a crowd, or cast him away into dust and lumber.

Randal gnawed his lip in the sullen wrath of a man who bides his hour of future emancipation, and lent his brain to the hire of the present servitude, in mechanical acquiescence. The inherent superiority of the profound young schemer became instantly apparent over the courage of Peschiera and the practised wit of the baron.

"Your sister," said Randal, to the former, "must be the active agent in the first and most difficult part of your enterprise. Violante cannot be taken by force from Lord Lansmere's,—she must be induced to leave it with her own consent. A female is needed here. Woman can best decoy woman."

"Admirably said," quoth the count; "but Beatrice has grown restive, and though her dowry, and therefore her very marriage with that excellent young Hazeldean, depend on my own alliance with my fair kinswoman, she has grown so indifferent to my success that I dare not reckon on her aid. Between you and me, though she was once very eager to be married, she now seems to shrink from the notion; and I have no other hold over her."

"Has she not seen some one, and lately, whom she prefers to poor Frank?"

"I suspect that she has; but I know not whom, unless it be that detested L'Estrange."

"Ah, well, well. Interfere with her no further yourself, but have all in readiness to quit England, as you had before proposed, as soon as Violante be in your power."

"All is in readiness," said the count. "Levy has agreed to purchase a famous sailing-vessel of one of his clients. I have engaged a score or so of determined outcasts, accustomed to the sea,—Genoese, Corsicans, Sardinians, ex-Carbonari of the best sort,—no silly patriots, but liberal cosmopolitans,

who have iron at the disposal of any man's gold. I have a priest to perform the nuptial service, and deaf to any fair lady's 'No.' Once at sea, and wherever I land, Violante will lean on my arm as Countess of Peschiera."

"But Violante," said Randal, doggedly, determined not to yield to the disgust with which the count's audacious cynicism filled even him — "but Violante cannot be removed in broad daylight at once to such a vessel, nor from a quarter so populous as that in which your sister resides."

"I have thought of that too," said the count; "my emissaries have found me a house close by the river, and safe for our purpose as the dungeons of Venice."

"I wish not to know all this," answered Randal, quickly; "you will instruct Madame di Negra where to take Violante, — my task limits itself to the fair inventions that belong to intellect; what belongs to force is not in my province. I will go at once to your sister, whom I think I can influence more effectually than you can; though later I may give you a hint to guard against the chance of her remorse. Meanwhile as, the moment Violante disappears, suspicion would fall upon you, show yourself constantly in public surrounded by your friends. Be able to account for every hour of your time —"

"An *alibi*?" interrupted the *ci-devant* solicitor.

"Exactly so, Baron. Complete the purchase of the vessel, and let the count man it as he proposes. I will communicate with you both as soon as I can put you into action. To-day I shall have much to do; it will be done."

As Randal left the room, Levy followed him.

"What you propose to do will be well done, no doubt," quoth the usurer, linking his arm in Randal's; "but take care that you don't get yourself into a scrape, so as to damage your character. I have great hopes of you in public life; and in public life character is necessary, — that is, so far as honour is concerned."

"I damage my character! — and for a Count Peschiera!" said Randal, opening his eyes. "I! What do you take me for?"

The baron let go his hold.

"This boy ought to rise very high," said he to himself, as he turned back to the count.

CHAPTER III.

RANDAL'S acute faculty of comprehension had long since surmised the truth that Beatrice's views and temper of mind had been strangely and suddenly altered by some such revolution as passion only can effect; that pique or disappointment had mingled with the motive which had induced her to accept the hand of his rash young kinsman; and that, instead of the resigned indifference with which she might at one time have contemplated any marriage that could free her from a position that perpetually galled her pride, it was now with a repugnance, visible to Randal's keen eye, that she shrank from the performance of that pledge which Frank had so dearly bought. The temptations which the count could hold out to her to become his accomplice in designs of which the fraud and perfidy would revolt her better nature had ceased to be of avail. A dowry had grown valueless, since it would but hasten the nuptials from which she recoiled. Randal felt that he could not secure her aid, except by working on a passion so turbulent as to confound her judgment. Such a passion he recognized in jealousy. He had once doubted if Harley were the object of her love; yet, after all, was it not probable? He knew, at least, of no one else to suspect. If so, he had but to whisper, "Violante is your rival. Violante removed, your beauty may find its natural effect; if not, you are an Italian, and you will be at least avenged." He saw still more reason to suppose that Lord L'Estrange was indeed the one by whom he could rule Beatrice, since, the last time he had seen her, she had questioned him with much eagerness as to the family of Lord Lansmere, especially as to the female

part of it. Randal had then judged it prudent to avoid speaking of Violante, and feigned ignorance; but promised to ascertain all particulars by the time he next saw the marchesa. It was the warmth with which she had thanked him that had set his busy mind at work to conjecture the cause of her curiosity so earnestly aroused, and to ascribe that cause to jealousy. If Harley loved Violante (as Randal himself had before supposed), the little of passion that the young man admitted to himself was enlisted in aid of Peschiera's schemes. For though Randal did not love Violante, he cordially disliked L'Estrange, and would have gone as far to render that dislike vindictive, as a cold reasoner, intent upon worldly fortunes, will ever suffer mere hate to influence him.

"At the worst," thought Randal, "if it be not Harley, touch the chord of jealousy, and its vibration will direct me right."

Thus soliloquizing, he arrived at Madame di Negra's.

Now, in reality the marchesa's inquiries as to Lord Lansmere's family had their source in the misguided, restless, despairing interest with which she still clung to the image of the young poet, whom Randal had no reason to suspect. That interest had become yet more keen from the impatient misery she had felt ever since she had plighted herself to another. A wild hope that she might yet escape, a vague regretful thought that she had been too hasty in dismissing Leonard from her presence,—that she ought rather to have courted his friendship, and contended against her unknown rival,—at times drew her wayward mind wholly from the future to which she had consigned herself. And, to do her justice, though her sense of duty was so defective, and the principles which should have guided her conduct were so lost to her sight, still her feelings towards the generous Hazeldean were not so hard and blunted but what her own ingratitude added to her torment; and it seemed as if the sole atonement she could make to him was to find an excuse to withdraw her promise, and save him from herself. She had caused Leonard's steps to be watched; she had found that he visited at Lord Lansmere's; that he had gone there often, and stayed

there long. She had learned in the neighbourhood that Lady Lansmere had one or two young female guests staying with her. Surely this was the attraction — here was the rival!

Randal found Beatrice in a state of mind that answered his purpose; and first turning his conversation on Harley, and noting that her countenance did not change, by little and little he drew forth her secret.

Then said Randal, gravely, "If one whom you honour with a tender thought visits at Lord Lansmere's house, you have, indeed, cause to fear for yourself, to hope for your brother's success in the object which has brought him to England; for a girl of surpassing beauty is a guest in Lord Lansmere's house, and I will now tell you that that girl is she whom Count Peschiera would make his bride."

As Randal thus spoke, and saw how his listener's brow darkened and her eye flashed, he felt that his accomplice was secured. Violante! Had not Leonard spoken of Violante, and with such praise? Had not his boyhood been passed under her eyes? Who but Violante could be the rival? Beatrice's abrupt exclamations, after a moment's pause, revealed to Randal the advantage he had gained. And partly by rousing her jealousy into revenge, partly by flattering her love with assurances that, if Violante were fairly removed from England, were the wife of Count Peschiera, it would be impossible that Leonard could remain insensible to her own attractions; that he, Randal, would undertake to free her honourably from her engagement to Frank Hazeldean, and obtain from her brother the acquittal of the debt which had first fettered her hand to that confiding suitor, — he did not quit the marchesa until she had not only promised to do all that Randal might suggest, but impetuously urged him to mature his plans, and hasten the hour to accomplish them. Randal then walked some minutes musing and slow along the streets, revolving the next meshes in his elaborate and most subtle web. And here his craft luminously devised its masterpiece.

It was necessary, during any interval that might elapse between Violante's disappearance and her departure from Eng-

land, in order to divert suspicion from Peschiera (who might otherwise be detained), that some cause for her voluntary absence from Lord Lansmere's should be at least assignable; it was still more necessary that Randal himself should stand wholly clear from any surmise that he could have connived at the count's designs, even should their actual perpetrator be discovered or conjectured. To effect these objects, Randal hastened to Norwood, and obtained an interview with Riccabocca. In seeming agitation and alarm, he informed the exile that he had reason to know that Peschiera had succeeded in obtaining a secret interview with Violante, and he feared had made a certain favourable impression on her mind; and speaking as if with the jealousy of a lover, he entreated Riccabocca to authorize Randal's direct proposals to Violante, and to require her consent to their immediate nuptials.

The poor Italian was confounded with the intelligence conveyed to him; and his almost superstitious fears of his brilliant enemy, conjoined with his opinion of the susceptibility to outward attractions common to all the female sex, made him not only implicitly credit, but even exaggerate, the dangers that Randal intimated. The idea of his daughter's marriage with Randal, towards which he had lately cooled, he now gratefully welcomed.

But his first natural suggestion was to go, or send, for Violante, and bring her to his own house. This, however, Randal artfully opposed.

"Alas! I know," said he, "that Peschiera has discovered your retreat, and surely she would be far less safe here than where she is now!"

"But, *diavolo!* you say the man has seen her where she is now, in spite of all Lady Lansmere's promises and Harley's precautions."

"True. Of this Peschiera boasted to me. He effected it not, of course, openly, but in some disguise. I am sufficiently, however, in his confidence — any man may be that with so audacious a braggart — to deter him from renewing his attempt for some days. Meanwhile, I or yourself will have discovered some surer home than this, to which you can re-

move, and then will be the proper time to take back your daughter. And for the present, if you will send by me a letter to enjoin her to receive me as her future bridegroom, it will necessarily divert all thought at once from the count; I shall be able to detect by the manner in which she receives me, how far the count has overstated the effect he pretends to have produced. You can give me also a letter to Lady Lansmere, to prevent your daughter coming hither. Oh, sir, do not reason with me. Have indulgence for my lover's fears. Believe that I advise for the best. Have I not the keenest interest to do so?"

Like many a man who is wise enough with pen and paper before him, and plenty of time wherewith to get up his wisdom, Riccabocca was flurried, nervous, and confused when that wisdom was called upon for any ready exertion. From the tree of knowledge he had taken grafts enough to serve for a forest; but the whole forest could not spare him a handy walking-stick. The great folio of the dead Machiavelli lay useless before him,—the living Machiavelli of daily life stood all puissant by his side. The Sage was as supple to the Schemer as the Clairvoyant is to the Mesmerist; and the lean slight fingers of Randal actually dictated almost the very words that Riccabocca wrote to his child and her hostess.

The philosopher would have liked to consult his wife; but he was ashamed to confess that weakness. Suddenly he remembered Harley, and said, as Randal took up the letters which Riccabocca had indited,—

"There, that will give us time; and I will send to Lord L'Estrange and talk to him."

"My noble friend," replied Randal, mournfully, "may I entreat you not to see Lord L'Estrange until at least I have pleaded my cause to your daughter,—until, indeed, she is no longer under his father's roof?"

"And why?"

"Because I presume that you are sincere when you deign to receive me as a son-in-law, and because I am sure that Lord L'Estrange would hear with distaste of your disposition in my favour. Am I not right?"

Riccabocca was silent.

"And though his arguments would fail with a man of your honour and discernment, they might have more effect on the young mind of your child. Think, I beseech you, the more she is set against me, the more accessible she may be to the arts of Peschiera. Speak not, therefore, I implore you, to Lord L'Estrange till Violante has accepted my hand, or at least until she is again under your charge; otherwise take back your letter,—it would be of no avail."

"Perhaps you are right. Certainly Lord L'Estrange is prejudiced against you; or rather, he thinks too much of what I have been, too little of what I am."

"Who can see you, and not do so? I pardon him." After kissing the hand which the exile modestly sought to withdraw from that act of homage, Randal pocketed the letters; and, as if struggling with emotion, rushed from the house.

Now, O curious reader, if thou wilt heedfully observe to what uses Randal Leslie put those letters,—what speedy and direct results he drew forth from devices which would seem to an honest simple understanding the most roundabout, wire-drawn wastes of invention,—I almost fear that in thine admiration for his cleverness, thou mayest half forget thy contempt for his knavery.

But when the head is very full, it does not do to have the heart very empty; there is such a thing as being top-heavy!

CHAPTER IV.

HELEN and Violante had been conversing together, and Helen had obeyed her guardian's injunction, and spoken, though briefly, of her positive engagement to Harley. However much Violante had been prepared for the confidence, however clearly she had divined that engagement, however before persuaded that the dream of her childhood was fled

forever, still the positive truth, coming from Helen's own lips, was attended with that anguish which proves how impossible it is to *prepare* the human heart for the final verdict which slays its future. She did not, however, betray her emotion to Helen's artless eyes; sorrow, deep-seated, is seldom self-betrayed. But, after a little while, she crept away; and, forgetful of Peschiera, of all things that could threaten danger (what danger could harm her more!), she glided from the house, and went her desolate way under the leafless wintry trees. Ever and anon she paused, ever and anon she murmured the same words: "If she loved him, I could be consoled; but she does not! or how could she have spoken to me so calmly! how could her very looks have been so sad! Heartless! heartless!"

Then there came on her a vehement resentment against poor Helen, that almost took the character of scorn or hate,—its excess startled herself. "Am I grown so mean?" she said; and tears that humbled her rushed to her eyes. "Can so short a time alter one thus? Impossible!"

Randal Leslie rang at the front gate, inquired for Violante, and, catching sight of her form as he walked towards the house, advanced boldly and openly. His voice startled her as she leaned against one of the dreary trees, still muttering to herself,—forlorn. "I have a letter to you from your father, Signorina," said Randal; "but before I give it to your hands, some explanation is necessary. Condescend, then, to hear me." Violante shook her head impatiently, and stretched forth her hand for the letter. Randal observed her countenance with his keen, cold, searching eye; but he still withheld the letter, and continued, after a pause,—

"I know that you were born to princely fortunes; and the excuse for my addressing you now is, that your birthright is lost to you, at least unless you can consent to a union with the man who has despoiled you of your heritage,—a union which your father would deem dishonour to yourself and him. Signorina, I might have presumed to love you; but I should not have named that love, had your father not encouraged me by his assent to my suit."

Violante turned to the speaker, her face eloquent with haughty surprise. Randal met the gaze unmoved. He continued, without warmth, and in the tone of one who reasons calmly, rather than of one who feels acutely,—

“The man of whom I spoke is in pursuit of you. I have cause to believe that this person has already intruded himself upon you. Ah, your countenance owns it; you have seen Peschiera? This house is, then, less safe than your father deemed it. No house is safe for you but a husband’s. I offer to you my name,—it is a gentleman’s; my fortune, which is small; the participation in my hopes of the future, which are large. I place now your father’s letter in your hand, and await your answer.” Randal bowed slightly, gave the letter to Violante, and retired a few paces.

It was not his object to conciliate Violante’s affection, but rather to excite her repugnance, or at least her terror,—we must wait to discover why; so he stood apart, seemingly in a kind of self-confident indifference, while the girl read the following letter:—

“My child, receive with favour Mr. Leslie. He has my consent to address you as a suitor. Circumstances of which it is needless now to inform you render it essential to my very peace and happiness that your marriage should be immediate. In a word, I have given my promise to Mr. Leslie, and I confidently leave it to the daughter of my House to redeem the pledge of her anxious and tender father.”

The letter dropped from Violante’s hand. Randal approached, and restored it to her. Their eyes met. Violante recoiled.

“I cannot marry you,” said she, passionately.

“Indeed?” answered Randal, dryly. “Is it because you cannot love me?”

“Yes.”

“I did not expect that you would as yet, and I still persist in my suit. I have promised to your father that I would not recede before your first unconsidered refusal.”

“I will go to my father at once.”

“Does he request you to do so in his letter? Look again.

Pardon me, but he foresaw your impetuosity; and I have another note for Lady Lansmere, in which he begs her ladyship not to sanction your return to him (should you so wish) until he come or send for you himself. He will do so whenever your word has redeemed his own."

"And do you dare to talk to me thus, and yet pretend to love me?"

Randal smiled ironically.

"I pretend but to wed you. Love is a subject on which I might have spoken formerly, or may speak hereafter. I give you some little time to consider. When I next call, let me hope that we may fix the day for our wedding."

"Never!"

"You will be, then, the first daughter of your House who disobeyed a father; and you will have this additional crime, that you disobeyed him in his sorrow, his exile, and his fall."

Violante wrung her hands.

"Is there no choice, no escape?"

"I see none for either. Listen to me. I love you, it is true; but it is not for my happiness to marry one who dislikes me, nor for my ambition to connect myself with one whose poverty is greater than my own. I marry but to keep my plighted faith with your father, and to save you from a villain you would hate more than myself, and from whom no walls are a barrier, no laws a defence. One person, indeed, might perhaps have preserved you from the misery you seem to anticipate with me; that person might defeat the plans of your father's foe,—effect, it might be, terms which could revoke his banishment and restore his honours; that person is —"

"Lord L'Estrange?"

"Lord L'Estrange!" repeated Randal, sharply, and watching her pale parted lips and her changing colour; "Lord L'Estrange! What could he do? Why did you name him?"

Violante turned aside. "He saved my father once," said she, feelingly.

"And has interfered, and trifled, and promised, Heaven knows what, ever since: yet to what end? Pooh! The person I speak of your father would not consent to see, would not believe if he saw her; yet she is generous, noble, could sympathize with you both. She is the sister of your father's enemy, the Marchesa di Negra. I am convinced that she has great influence with her brother,—that she has known enough of his secrets to awe him into renouncing all designs on yourself; but it is idle now to speak of her."

"No, no," exclaimed Violante. "Tell me where she lives—I will see her."

"Pardon me, I cannot obey you; and, indeed, her own pride is now aroused by your father's unfortunate prejudices against her. It is too late to count upon her aid. You turn from me,—my presence is unwelcome. I rid you of it now. But welcome or unwelcome, later you must endure it—and for life."

Randal again bowed with formal ceremony, walked towards the house, and asked for Lady Lansmere. The countess was at home. Randal delivered Riccabocca's note, which was very short, implying that he feared Peschiera had discovered his retreat, and requesting Lady Lansmere to retain Violante, whatever her own desire, till her ladyship heard from him again.

The countess read, and her lip curled in disdain. "Strange!" said she, half to herself.

"Strange!" said Randal, "that a man like your correspondent should fear one like the Count di Peschiera. Is that it?"

"Sir," said the countess, a little surprised, "strange that any man should fear another in a country like ours!"

"I don't know," said Randal, with his low soft laugh; "I fear many men, and I know many who ought to fear me; yet at every turn of the street one meets a policeman!"

"Yes," said Lady Lansmere. "But to suppose that this profligate foreigner could carry away a girl like Violante against her will,—a man she has never seen, and whom she must have been taught to hate!"

"Be on your guard, nevertheless, I pray you, madam; 'Where there's a will there's a way.'"

Randal took his leave, and returned to Madame di Negra's. He stayed with her an hour, revisited the count, and then strolled to Limmer's.

"Randal," said the squire, who looked pale and worn, but who scorned to confess the weakness with which he still grieved and yearned for his rebellious son, "Randal, you have nothing now to do in London; can you come and stay with me, and take to farming? I remember that you showed a good deal of sound knowledge about thin sowing."

"My dear sir, I will come to you as soon as the general election is over."

"What the deuce have you got to do with the general election?"

"Mr. Egerton has some wish that I should enter parliament; indeed, negotiations for that purpose are now on foot."

The squire shook his head. "I don't like my half-brother's politics."

"I shall be quite independent of them," cried Randal, loftily; "that independence is the condition for which I stipulate."

"Glad to hear it; and if you do come into parliament, I hope you'll not turn your back on the land?"

"Turn my back on the land!" cried Randal, with devout horror. "Oh, sir, I am not so unnatural!"

"That's the right way to put it," quoth the credulous squire; "it is unnatural! It is turning one's back on one's own mother. The land is a mother—"

"To those who live by her, certainly,—a mother," said Randal, gravely. "And though, indeed, my father starves by her rather than lives, and Rood Hall is not like Hazeldean, still—I—"

"Hold your tongue," interrupted the squire; "I want to talk to you. Your grandmother was a Hazeldean."

"Her picture is in the drawing-room at Rood. People think me very like her."

"Indeed!" said the squire. "The Hazeldeans are generally inclined to be stout and rosy, which you are certainly not. But no fault of yours. We are all as Heaven made us. However, to the point. I am going to alter my will," —(said with a choking gulp). "This is the rough draft for the lawyers to work upon."

"Pray, pray, sir, do not speak to me on such a subject. I cannot bear to contemplate even the possibility of — of —"

"My death? Ha, ha! Nonsense. My own son calculated on the date of it by the insurance-tables. Ha, ha, ha! A very fashionable son, eh! Ha, ha!"

"Poor Frank! do not let him suffer for a momentary forgetfulness of right feeling. When he comes to be married to that foreign lady, and be a father himself, he —"

"Father himself!" burst forth the squire. "Father to a swarm of sallow-faced Popish tadpoles! No foreign frogs shall hop about my grave in Hazeldean churchyard. No, no. But you need not look so reproachful, — I'm not going to disinherit Frank."

"Of course not," said Randal, with a bitter curve in the lip that rebelled against the joyous smile which he sought to impose on it.

"No; I shall leave him the life-interest in the greater part of the property; but if he marry a foreigner, her children will not succeed, — you will stand after him in that case. But — now don't interrupt me — but Frank looks as if he would live longer than you, so small thanks to me for my good intentions, you may say. I mean to do more for you than a mere barren place in the entail. What do you say to marrying?"

"Just as you please," said Randal, meekly.

"Good. There's Miss Sticktorights disengaged, — great heiress. Her lands run on to Rood. At one time I thought of her for that graceless puppy of mine. But I can manage more easily to make up the match for you. There's a mortgage on the property; old Sticktorights would be very glad to pay it off. I'll pay it out of the Hazeldean estate, and give up the Right of Way into the bargain. You understand?"

So come down as soon as you can, and court the young lady yourself."

Randal expressed his thanks with much grateful eloquence; and he then delicately insinuated, that if the squire ever did mean to bestow upon him any pecuniary favours (always without injury to Frank), it would gratify him more to win back some portions of the old estate of Rood, than to have all the acres of the Sticktorights, however free from any other incumbrance than the amiable heiress.

The squire listened to Randal with benignant attention. This wish the country gentleman could well understand and sympathize with. He promised to inquire into the matter, and to see what could be done with old Thornhill.

Randal here let out that Mr. Thornhill was about to dispose of a large slice of the ancient Leslie estate through Levy, and that he, Randal, could thus get it at a more moderate price than would be natural, if Mr. Thornhill knew that his neighbour the squire would bid for the purchase.

"Better say nothing about it either to Levy or Thornhill."

"Right," said the squire. "No proprietor likes to sell to another proprietor, in the same shire, as largely acred as himself: it spoils the balance of power. See to the business yourself; and if I can help you with the purchase (after that boy is married,—I can attend to nothing before), why, I will."

Randal now went to Egerton's. The statesman was in his library, settling the accounts of his house-steward, and giving brief orders for the reduction of his establishment to that of an ordinary private gentleman.

"I may go abroad if I lose my election," said Egerton, condescending to assign to his servant a reason for his economy; "and if I do not lose it, still, now I am out of office, I shall live much in private."

"Do I disturb you, sir?" said Randal, entering.

"No; I have just done."

The house-steward withdrew, much surprised and disgusted, and meditating the resignation of his own office,—in order, not like Egerton, to save, but to spend. The house-

steward had private dealings with Baron Levy, and was in fact the veritable X. Y. of the "Times," for whom Dick Avenel had been mistaken. He invested his wages and perquisites in the discount of bills; and it was part of his own money that had (though unknown to himself) swelled the last £5,000 which Egerton had borrowed from Levy.

"I have settled with our committee; and, with Lord Lansmere's consent," said Egerton, briefly, "you will stand for the borough, as we proposed, in conjunction with myself. And should any accident happen to me,—that is, should I vacate this seat from any cause,—you may succeed to it, very shortly perhaps. Ingratiate yourself with the electors, and speak at the public-houses for both of us. I shall stand on my dignity, and leave the work of the election to you. No thanks,—you know how I hate thanks. Good-night."

"I never stood so near to fortune and to power," said Randal, as he slowly undressed. "And I owe it but to knowledge,—knowledge of men, life, of all that books can teach us."

So his slight thin fingers dropped the extinguisher on the candle, and the prosperous Schemer laid himself down to rest in the dark. Shutters closed, curtains drawn—never was rest more quiet, never was room more dark!

That evening, Harley had dined at his father's. He spoke much to Helen, scarcely at all to Violante. But it so happened that when later, and a little while before he took his leave, Helen, at his request, was playing a favourite air of his, Lady Lansmere, who had been seated between him and Violante, left the room, and Violante turned quickly towards Harley.

"Do you know the Marchesa di Negra?" she asked, in a hurried voice.

"A little. Why do you ask?"

"That is my secret," answered Violante, trying to smile with her old frank, childlike archness. "But, tell me, do you think better of her than of her brother?"

"Certainly. I believe her heart to be good, and that she is not without generous qualities."

"Can you not induce my father to see her? Would you not counsel him to do so?"

"Any wish of yours is a law to me," answered Harley, gallantly. "You wish your father to see her? I will try and persuade him to do so. Now, in return, confide to me your secret. What is your object?"

"Leave to return to my Italy. I care not for honours, for rank; and even my father has ceased to regret their loss. But the land, the native land — Oh, to see it once more! Oh, to die there!"

"Die! You children have so lately left heaven, that ye talk as if ye could return there, without passing through the gates of sorrow, infirmity, and age! But I thought you were content with England. Why so eager to leave it? Violante, you are unkind to us, — to Helen, who already loves you so well."

As Harley spoke, Helen rose from the piano, and approaching Violante, placed her hand caressingly on the Italian's shoulder. Violante shivered, and shrunk away. The eyes both of Harley and Helen followed her. Harley's eyes were very grave and thoughtful.

"Is she not changed — your friend?" said he, looking down.

"Yes, lately; much changed. I fear there is something on her mind, — I know not what."

"Ah," muttered Harley, "it may be so; but at your age and hers, nothing rests on the mind long. Observe, I say the mind, — the heart is more tenacious."

Helen sighed softly, but deeply.

"And therefore," continued Harley, half to himself, "we can detect when something is on the mind, — some care, some fear, some trouble. But when the heart closes over its own more passionate sorrow, who can discover, who conjecture? Yet you at least, my pure, candid Helen, — you might subject mind and heart alike to the fabled window of glass."

"Oh, no!" cried Helen, involuntarily.

"Oh, yes! Do not let me think that you have one secret I may not know, or one sorrow I may not share. For, in our relationship, *that* would be deceit."

He pressed her hand with more than usual tenderness as he spoke, and shortly afterwards left the house.

And all that night Helen felt like a guilty thing,— more wretched even than Violante.

CHAPTER V.

EARLY the next morning, while Violante was still in her room, a letter addressed to her came by the post. The direction was in a strange hand. She opened it, and read, in Italian, what is thus translated:—

I would gladly see you, but I cannot call openly at the house in which you live. Perhaps I may have it in my power to arrange family dissensions, — to repair any wrongs your father may have sustained. Perhaps I may be enabled to render yourself an essential service. But for all this it is necessary that we should meet and confer frankly. Meanwhile time presses, delay is forbidden. Will you meet me, an hour after noon, in the lane, just outside the private gate of your gardens? I shall be alone, and you cannot fear to meet one of your own sex, and a kinswoman. Ah, I so desire to see you! Come, I beseech you.

BEATRICE.

Violante read, and her decision was taken. She was naturally fearless, and there was little that she would not have braved for the chance of serving her father. And now all peril seemed slight in comparison with that which awaited her in Randal's suit, backed by her father's approval. Randal had said that Madame di Negra alone could aid her in escape from himself. Harley had said that Madame di Negra had generous qualities; and who but Madame di Negra would write herself a kinswoman, and sign herself "Beatrice"?

A little before the appointed hour, she stole unobserved through the trees, opened the little gate, and found herself in the quiet, solitary lane. In a few minutes, a female figure

came up, with a quick, light step; and throwing aside her veil, said, with a sort of wild, suppressed energy, "It is you! I was truly told. Beautiful! beautiful! And oh! what youth and what bloom!"

The voice dropped mournfully; and Violante, surprised by the tone, and blushing under the praise, remained a moment silent; then she said, with some hesitation,—

"You are, I presume, the Marchesa di Negra? And I have heard of you enough to induce me to trust you."

"Of me! From whom?" asked Beatrice, almost fiercely.

"From Mr Leslie, and — and —"

"Go on; why falter?"

"From Lord L'Estrange."

"From no one else?"

"Not that I remember."

Beatrice sighed heavily, and let fall her veil. Some foot-passengers now came up the lane; and seeing two ladies, of mien so remarkable, turned round, and gazed curiously.

"We cannot talk here," said Beatrice, impatiently; "and I have so much to say, so much to know. Trust me yet more; it is for yourself I speak. My carriage waits yonder. Come home with me,—I will not detain you an hour; and I will bring you back."

This proposition startled Violante. She retreated towards the gate with a gesture of dissent. Beatrice laid her hand on the girl's arm, and again lifting her veil, gazed at her with a look half of scorn, half of admiration.

"I, too, would once have recoiled from one step beyond the formal line by which the world divides liberty from woman. Now see how bold I am. Child, child, do not trifle with your destiny. You may never again have the same occasion offered to you. It is not only to meet you that I am here; I must know something of you,—something of your heart. Why shrink? Is not the heart pure?"

Violante made no answer; but her smile, so sweet and so lofty, humbled the questioner it rebuked.

"I may restore to Italy your father," said Beatrice, with an altered voice. "Come!"

Violante approached, but still hesitatingly.

"Not by union with your brother?"

"You dread that so much then?"

"Dread it? No. Why should I dread what is in my power to reject. But if you can really restore my father, and by nobler means, you may save me for —"

Violante stopped abruptly; the marchesa's eyes sparkled.

"Save you for — ah! I can guess what you leave unsaid. But come, come! more strangers, see; you shall tell me all at my own house. And if you can make one sacrifice, why, I will save you all else. Come, or farewell forever!"

Violante placed her hand in Beatrice's, with a frank confidence that brought the accusing blood into the marchesa's cheek.

"We are women both," said Violante; "we descend from the same noble House; we have knelt alike to the same Virgin Mother; why should I not believe and trust you?"

"Why not?" muttered Beatrice, feebly; and she moved on, with her head bowed on her breast, and all the pride of her step was gone.

They reached a carriage that stood by the angle of the road. Beatrice spoke a word apart to the driver, who was an Italian, in the pay of the count; the man nodded, and opened the carriage door. The ladies entered. Beatrice pulled down the blinds; the man remounted his box, and drove on rapidly. Beatrice, leaning back, groaned aloud. Violante drew nearer to her side. "Are you in pain?" said she, with her tender, melodious voice; "or can I serve you as you would serve me?"

"Child, give me your hand, and be silent while I look at you. Was I ever so fair as this? Never! And what deeps — what deeps roll between her and me!"

She said this as of some one absent, and again sank into silence; but continued still to gaze on Violante, whose eyes, veiled by their long fringes, drooped beneath the gaze.

Suddenly Beatrice started, exclaiming, "No, it shall not be!" and placed her hand on the check-string.

"What shall not be?" asked Violante, surprised by the cry.

and the action. Beatrice paused; her breast heaved visibly under her dress.

"Stay," she said slowly. "As you say, we are both women of the same noble House; you would reject the suit of my brother, yet you have seen him; his the form to please the eye, his the arts that allure the fancy. He offers to you rank, wealth, your father's pardon and recall. If I could remove the objections which your father entertains, prove that the count has less wronged him than he deems, would you still reject the rank and the wealth and the hand of Giulio Franzini?"

"Oh, yes, yes; were his hand a king's!"

"Still, then, as woman to woman — both, as you say, akin, and sprung from the same lineage — still, then, answer me, — answer me, for you speak to one who has loved — Is it not that you love another? Speak."

"I do not know. Nay, not love, — it was a romance; it is a thing impossible. Do not question, — I cannot answer." And the broken words were choked by sudden tears.

Beatrice's face grew hard and pitiless. Again she lowered her veil, and withdrew her hand from the check-string; but the coachman had felt the touch, and halted. "Drive on," said Beatrice, "as you were directed."

Both were now long silent, — Violante with great difficulty recovering from her emotion, Beatrice breathing hard, and her arms folded firmly across her breast.

Meanwhile the carriage had entered London; it passed the quarter in which Madame di Negra's house was situated; it rolled fast over a bridge; it whirled through a broad thoroughfare, then through defiles of lanes, with tall blank dreary houses on either side. On it went, and on, till Violante suddenly took alarm. "Do you live so far?" she said, drawing up the blind, and gazing in dismay on the strange, ignoble suburb. "I shall be missed already. Oh, let us turn back, I beseech you!"

"We are nearly there now. The driver has taken this road in order to avoid those streets in which we might have been seen together, — perhaps by my brother himself. Listen to

me, and talk of — of the lover whom you rightly associate with a vain romance. ‘Impossible,’ — yes, it is impossible !”

Violante clasped her hands before her eyes, and bowed down her head. “Why are you so cruel?” said she. “This is not what you promised. How are you to serve my father, how restore him to his country? This is what you promised !”

“If you consent to one sacrifice, I will fulfil that promise. We are arrived.”

The carriage stopped before a tall, dull house, divided from other houses by a high wall that appeared to enclose a yard, and standing at the end of a narrow lane, which was bounded on the one side by the Thames. In that quarter the river was crowded with gloomy, dark-looking vessels and craft, all lying lifeless under the wintry sky.

The driver dismounted and rang the bell. Two swarthy Italian faces presented themselves at the threshold.

Beatrice descended lightly, and gave her hand to Violante. “Now, here we shall be secure,” said she; “and here a few minutes may suffice to decide your fate.”

As the door closed on Violante, who, now waking to suspicion, to alarm, looked fearfully round the dark and dismal hall, Beatrice turned: “Let the carriage wait.”

The Italian who received the order bowed and smiled; but when the two ladies had ascended the stairs he re-opened the street-door, and said to the driver, “Back to the count, and say, ‘All is safe.’”

The carriage drove off. The man who had given this order barred and locked the door, and, taking with him the huge key, plunged into the mystic recesses of the basement and disappeared. The hall, thus left solitary, had the grim aspect of a prison,—the strong door sheeted with iron, the rugged stone stairs, lighted by a high window grimed with the dust of years, and jealously barred, and the walls themselves abutting out rudely here and there, as if against violence even from within.

CHAPTER VI.

It was, as we have seen, without taking counsel of the faithful Jemima that the sage recluse of Norwood had yielded to his own fears and Randal's subtle suggestions, in the concise and arbitrary letter which he had written to Violante; but at night, when churchyards give up the dead, and conjugal hearts the secrets hid by day from each other, the wise man informed his wife of the step he had taken. And Jemima then — who held English notions, very different from those which prevail in Italy, as to the right of fathers to dispose of their daughters without reference to inclination or repugnance — so sensibly yet so mildly represented to the pupil of Machiavelli that he had not gone exactly the right way to work, if he feared that the handsome count had made some impression on Violante, and if he wished her to turn with favour to the suitor he recommended, — that so abrupt a command could only chill the heart, revolt the will, and even give to the audacious Peschiera some romantic attraction which he had not before possessed, — as effectually to destroy Riccabocca's sleep that night. And the next day he sent Giacomo to Lady Lansmere's with a very kind letter to Violante and a note to the hostess, praying the latter to bring his daughter to Norwood for a few hours, as he much wished to converse with both. It was on Giacomo's arrival at Knightsbridge that Violante's absence was discovered. Lady Lansmere, ever proudly careful of the world and its gossip, kept Giacomo from betraying his excitement to her servants, and stated throughout the decorous household that the young lady had informed her she was going to visit some friends that morning, and had no doubt gone through the garden gate, since it was found open; the way was more quiet there than by the high-road, and her friends might have therefore walked to meet her by the lane. Lady Lansmere observed that her

only surprise was that Violante had gone earlier than she had expected. Having said this with a composure that compelled belief, Lady Lansmere ordered the carriage, and, taking Giacomo with her, drove at once to consult her son.

Harley's quick intellect had scarcely recovered from the shock upon his emotions before Randal Leslie was announced.

"Ah," said Lady Lansmere, "Mr. Leslie may know something. He came to her yesterday with a note from her father. Pray let him enter."

The Austrian prince approached Harley. "I will wait in the next room," he whispered. "You may want me if you have cause to suspect Peschiera in all this."

Lady Lansmere was pleased with the prince's delicacy, and, glancing at Leonard, said, "Perhaps you, too, sir, may kindly aid us, if you would retire with the prince. Mr. Leslie may be disinclined to speak of affairs like these, except to Harley and myself."

"True, madam, but beware of Mr. Leslie."

As the door at one end of the room closed on the prince and Leonard, Randal entered at the other, seemingly much agitated.

"I have just been to your house, Lady Lansmere. I heard you were here; pardon me if I have followed you. I have called at Knightsbridge to see Violante, learned that she had left you. I implore you to tell me how or wherefore. I have the right to ask: her father has promised me her hand."

Harley's falcon eye had brightened up at Randal's entrance. It watched steadily the young man's face. It was clouded for a moment by his knitted brows at Randal's closing words; but he left it to Lady Lansmere to reply and explain. This the countess did briefly.

Randal clasped his hands. "And has she not gone to her father's? Are you sure of that?"

"Her father's servant has just come from Norwood."

"Oh, I am to blame for this! It is my rash suit, her fear of it, her aversion! I see it all!" Randal's voice was hollow with remorse and despair. "To save her from Peschiera, her father insisted on her immediate marriage with myself. His

orders were too abrupt, my own wooing too unwelcome. I know her high spirit; she has fled to escape from me. But whither, if not to Norwood,—oh, whither? What other friends has she, what relations?"

"You throw a new light on this mystery," said Lady Lansmere; "perhaps she may have gone to her father's after all, and the servant may have crossed, but missed her on the way. I will drive to Norwood at once."

"Do so,—do; but if she be not there, be careful not to alarm Riccabocca with the news of her disappearance. Caution Giacomo not to do so. He would only suspect Peschiera, and be hurried to some act of violence."

"Do not you, then, suspect Peschiera, Mr. Leslie?" asked Harley, suddenly.

"Ha! is it possible? Yet, no. I called on him this morning with Frank Hazeldean, who is to marry his sister. I was with him till I went on to Knightsbridge, at the very time of Violante's disappearance. He could not then have been a party to it."

"You saw Violante yesterday. Did you speak to her of Madame di Negra?" asked Harley, suddenly recalling the questions respecting the marchesa which Violante had addressed to him.

In spite of himself, Randal felt that he changed countenance. "Of Madame di Negra? I do not think so. Yet I might. Oh, yes, I remember now. She asked me the marchesa's address; I would not give it."

"The address is easily found. Can she have gone to the marchesa's house?"

"I will run there, and see," cried Randal, starting up.

"And I with you. Stay, my dear mother. Proceed, as you propose, to Norwood, and take Mr. Leslie's advice. Spare our friend the news of his daughter's loss—if lost she be—till she is restored to him. He can be of no use meanwhile. Let Giacomo rest here; I may want him."

Harley then passed into the next room, and entreated the prince and Leonard to await his return, and allow Giacomo to stay in the same room.

He then went quickly back to Randal. Whatever might be his fears or emotions, Harley felt that he had need of all his coolness of judgment and presence of mind. The occasion made abrupt demand upon powers which had slept since boyhood, but which now woke with a vigour that would have made even Randal tremble, could he have detected the wit, the courage, the electric energies, masked under that tranquil self-possession. Lord L'Estrange and Randal soon reached the marchesa's house, and learned that she had been out since morning in one of Count Peschiera's carriages. Randal stole an alarmed glance at Harley's face. Harley did not seem to notice it.

"Now, Mr. Leslie, what do you advise next?"

"I am at a loss. Ah, perhaps, afraid of her father, knowing how despotic is his belief in paternal rights, and how tenacious he is of his word once passed, as it has been to me, she may have resolved to take refuge in the country, perhaps at the Casino, or at Mrs. Dale's, or Mrs. Hazeldean's. I will hasten to inquire at the coach-office. Meanwhile, you —"

"Never mind me, Mr. Leslie. Do what you think best. But, if your surmises be just, you must have been a very rude wooer to the high-born lady you aspired to win."

"Not so; but perhaps an unwelcome one. If she has indeed fled from me, need I say that my suit will be withdrawn at once? I am not a selfish lover, Lord L'Estrange."

"Nor I a vindictive man. Yet, could I discover who has conspired against this lady, a guest under my father's roof, I would crush him into the mire as easily as I set my foot upon this glove. Good-day to you, Mr. Leslie."

Randal stood still for a few moments as Harley strided on; then his lip sneered as it muttered, "Insolent! But does he love her? If so, I am avenged already."

CHAPTER VII.

HARLEY went straight to Peschiera's hotel. He was told that the count had walked out with Mr. Frank Hazeldean and some other gentlemen who had breakfasted with him. He had left word, in case any one called, that he had gone to Tattersall's to look at some horses that were for sale. To Tattersall's went Harley. The count was in the yard leaning against a pillar, and surrounded by fashionable friends. Lord L'Estrange paused, and, with an heroic effort at self-mastery, repressed his rage. "I may lose all if I show that I suspect him; and yet I must insult and fight him rather than leave his movements free. Ah, is that young Hazeldean? A thought strikes me!" Frank was standing apart from the group round the count, and looking very absent and very sad. Harley touched him on the shoulder, and drew him aside unobserved by the count.

"Mr. Hazeldean, your uncle Egerton is my dearest friend. Will you be a friend to me? I want you."

"My Lord —"

"Follow me. Do not let Count Peschiera see us talking together."

Harley quitted the yard, and entered St. James's Park by the little gate close by. In a very few words he informed Frank of Violante's disappearance and of his reasons for suspecting the count. Frank's first sentiment was that of indignant disbelief that the brother of Beatrice could be so vile; but as he gradually called to mind the cynical and corrupt vein of the count's familiar conversation, the hints to Peschiera's prejudice that had been dropped by Beatrice herself, and the general character for brilliant and daring profligacy which even the admirers of the count ascribed to him, Frank was compelled to reluctant acquiescence in Harley's suspicions; and he said, with an earnest gravity very rare to him,

"Believe me, Lord L'Estrange, if I can assist you in defeating a base and mercenary design against this poor young lady, you have but to show me how. One thing is clear,—Peschiera was not personally engaged in this abduction, since I have been with him all day; and — now I think of it — I begin to hope that you wrong him; for he has invited a large party of us to make an excursion with him to Boulogne next week, in order to try his yacht, which he could scarcely do if —"

"Yacht, at this time of the year! a man who habitually resides at Vienna — a yacht!"

"Spendquick sells it a bargain, on account of the time of year and other reasons; and the count proposes to spend next summer in cruising about the Ionian Isles. He has some property on those isles, which he has never yet visited."

"How long is it since he bought this yacht?"

"Why, I am not sure that it is already bought, — that is, paid for. Levy was to meet Spendquick this very morning to arrange the matter. Spendquick complains that Levy screws him."

"My dear Mr. Hazeldean, you are guiding me through the maze. Where shall I find Lord Spendquick?"

"At this hour, probably in bed. Here is his card."

"Thanks. And where lies the vessel?"

"It was off Blackwall the other day. I went to see it, 'The Flying Dutchman,' — a fine vessel, and carries guns."

"Enough. Now, heed me. There can be no immediate danger to Violante, so long as Peschiera does not meet her, so long as we know his movements. You are about to marry his sister. Avail yourself of that privilege to keep close by his side. Refuse to be shaken off. Make what excuses for the present your invention suggests. I will give you an excuse. Be anxious and uneasy to know where you can find Madame di Negra."

"Madame di Negra!" cried Frank. "What of her? Is she not in Curzon Street?"

"No; she has gone out in one of the count's carriages. In all probability the driver of that carriage, or some servant in

attendance on it, will come to the count in the course of the day; and in order to get rid of you, the count will tell you to see this servant, and ascertain yourself that his sister is safe. Pretend to believe what the man says, but make him come to your lodgings on pretence of writing there a letter for the marchesa. Once at your lodgings, and he will be safe; for I shall see that the officers of justice secure him. The moment he is there, send an express for me to my hotel."

"But," said Frank, a little bewildered, "if I go to my lodgings, how can I watch the count?"

"It will not then be necessary. Only get him to accompany you to your lodgings, and part with him at the door."

"Stop, stop! you cannot suspect Madame di Negra of connivance in a scheme so infamous. Pardon me, Lord L'Estrange; I cannot act in this matter,—cannot even hear you except as your foe, if you insinuate a word against the honour of the woman I love."

"Brave gentleman, your hand. It is Madame di Negra I would save, as well as my friend's young child. Think but of her, while you act as I entreat, and all will go well. I confide in you. Now, return to the count."

Frank walked back to join Peschiera, and his brow was thoughtful, and his lips closed firmly. Harley had that gift which belongs to the genius of Action. He inspired others with the light of his own spirit and the force of his own will. Harley next hastened to Lord Spendquick, remained with that young gentleman some minutes, then repaired to his hotel, where Leonard, the prince, and Giacomo still awaited him.

"Come with me, both of you. You, too, Giacomo. I must now see the police. We may then divide upon separate missions."

"Oh, my dear Lord," cried Leonard, "you must have had good news. You seem cheerful and sanguine."

"*Seem!* Nay, I *am* so! If I once paused to despond—even to doubt—I should go mad. A foe to baffle, and an angel to save! Whose spirits would not rise high, whose wits would not move quick to the warm pulse of his heart?"

CHAPTER VIII.

TWILIGHT was dark in the room to which Beatrice had conducted Violante. A great change had come over Beatrice. Humble and weeping, she knelt beside Violante, hiding her face, and imploring pardon. And Violante, striving to resist the terror for which she now saw such cause as no woman-heart can defy, still sought to soothe, and still sweetly assured forgiveness.

Beatrice had learned, after quick and fierce questions, which at last compelled the answers that cleared away every doubt, that her jealousy had been groundless, that she had no rival in Violante. From that moment the passions that had made her the tool of guilt abruptly vanished, and her conscience startled her with the magnitude of her treachery. Perhaps had Violante's heart been wholly free, or she had been of that mere commonplace, girlish character which women like Beatrice are apt to despise, the marchesa's affection for Peschiera, and her dread of him, might have made her try to persuade her young kinswoman at least to receive the count's visit,—at least to suffer him to make his own excuses, and plead his own cause. But there had been a loftiness of spirit in which Violante had first defied the marchesa's questions, followed by such generous, exquisite sweetness, when the girl perceived how that wild heart was stung and maddened, and such purity of mournful candour when she had overcome her own virgin bashfulness sufficiently to undeceive the error she detected, and confess where her own affections were placed, that Beatrice bowed before her as mariner of old to some fair saint that had allayed the storm.

"I have deceived you!" she cried, through her sobs; "but I will now save you at any cost. Had you been as I deemed,—the rival who had despoiled all the hopes of my future life,—I could without remorse have been the accomplice I am pledged to be. But *now* you — Oh, you, so good and so

noble — you can never be the bride of Peschiera. Nay, start not; he shall renounce his designs forever, or I will go myself to our emperor, and expose the dark secrets of his life. Return with me quick to the home from which I ensnared you.”

Beatrice’s hand was on the door while she spoke. Suddenly her face fell, her lips grew white; the door was locked from without. She called,— no one answered; the bell-pull in the room gave no sound; the windows were high and barred,— they did not look on the river, nor the street, but on a close, gloomy, silent yard, high blank walls all round it; no one to hear the cry of distress, rang it ever so loud and sharp.

Beatrice divined that she herself had been no less ensnared than her companion; that Peschiera, distrustful of her firmness in evil, had precluded her from the power of reparation. She was in a house only tenanted by his hirelings. Not a hope to save Violante from a fate that now appalled her seemed to remain. Thus, in incoherent self-reproaches and frenzied tears, Beatrice knelt beside her victim, communicating more and more the terrors that she felt, as the hour rolled on, and the room darkened, till it was only by the dull lamp which gleamed through the grimy windows from the yard without, that each saw the face of the other.

Night came on; they heard a clock from some distant church strike the hours. The dim fire had long since burned out, and the air became intensely cold. No one broke upon their solitude,— not a voice was heard in the house. They felt neither cold nor hunger,— they felt but the solitude, and the silence, and the dread of something that was to come.

At length, about midnight, a bell rang at the street door; then there was the quick sound of steps, of sullen bolts withdrawn, of low, murmured voices. Light streamed through the chinks of the door to the apartment, the door itself opened. Two Italians bearing tapers entered, and the Count di Peschiera followed.

Beatrice sprang up, and rushed towards her brother. He laid his hand gently on her lips, and motioned to the Italians to withdraw. They placed the lights on the table, and vanished without a word.

Peschiera then, putting aside his sister, approached Violante.

"Fair kinswoman," said he, with an air of easy but resolute assurance, "there are things which no man can excuse, and no woman can pardon, unless that love, which is beyond all laws, suggests excuse for the one, and obtains pardon for the other. In a word, I have sworn to win you, and I have had no opportunities to woo. Fear not; the worst that can befall you is to be my bride! Stand aside, my sister, stand aside."

"Giulio Franzini, I stand between you and her; you shall strike me to the earth before you can touch even the hem of her robe!"

"What, my sister! you turn against me?"

"And unless you instantly retire and leave her free, I will unmask you to the emperor."

"Too late, *mon enfant*! You will sail with us. The effects you may need for the voyage are already on board. You will be witness to our marriage, and by a holy son of the Church. Then tell the emperor what you will."

With a light and sudden exertion of his strength, the count put away Beatrice, and fell on his knee before Violante, who, drawn to her full height, death-like pale, but untrembling, regarded him with unutterable disdain.

"You scorn me now," said he, throwing into his features an expression of humility and admiration, "and I cannot wonder at it. But, believe me, that until the scorn yield to a kinder sentiment, I will take no advantage of the power I have gained over your fate."

"Power!" said Violante, haughtily. "You have ensnared me into this house, you have gained the power of a day; but the power over my fate,—no!"

"You mean that your friends have discovered your disappearance, and are on your track. Fair one, I provide against your friends, and I defy all the laws and police of England. The vessel that will bear you from these shores waits in the river hard by. Beatrice, I warn you,—be still, unhand me. In that vessel will be a priest who shall join our hands, but

not before you will recognize the truth, that she who flies with Giulio Peschiera must become his wife or quit him as the disgrace of her House, and the scorn of her sex."

"O villain! villain!" cried Beatrice.

"*Peste*, my sister, gentler words. You, too, would marry. I tell no tales of you. Signorina, I grieve to threaten force. Give me your hand; we must be gone."

Violante eluded the clasp that would have profaned her, and darting across the room, opened the door, and closed it hastily behind her. Beatrice clung firmly to the count to detain him from pursuit. But just without the door, close, as if listening to what passed within, stood a man wrapped from head to foot in a large boat cloak. The ray of the lamp that beamed on the man glittered on the barrel of a pistol which he held in his right hand.

"Hist!" whispered the man in English, and passing his arm round her; "in this house you are in that ruffian's power; out of it, safe. Ah, I am by your side, — I, Violante!"

The voice thrilled to Violante's heart. She started, looked up, but nothing was seen of the man's face, what with the hat and cloak, save a mass of raven curls, and a beard of the same hue.

The count now threw open the door, dragging after him his sister, who still clung round him.

"Ha, that is well!" he cried to the man, in Italian. "Bear the lady after me, gently; but if she attempt to cry out, why, force enough to silence her, not more. As for you, Beatrice, traitress that you are, I could strike you to the earth, but — No, this suffices." He caught his sister in his arms as he spoke, and regardless of her cries and struggles, sprang down the stairs.

The hall was crowded with fierce, swarthy men. The count turned to one of them, and whispered; in an instant the marchesa was seized and gagged. The count cast a look over his shoulder; Violante was close behind, supported by the man to whom Peschiera had consigned her, and who was pointing to Beatrice, and appeared warning Violante against resistance. Violante was silent, and seemed resigned. Peschiera smiled



BEATRICE DEFENDING VIOLANTE FROM PESCHIERA.

cynically, and, preceded by some of his hirelings, who held torches, descended a few steps that led to an abrupt landing-place between the hall and the basement story. There a small door stood open, and the river flowed close by. A boat was moored on the bank, round which grouped four men, who had the air of foreign sailors. At the appearance of Peschiera, three of these men sprang into the boat, and got ready their oars. The fourth carefully re-adjusted a plank thrown from the boat to the wharf, and offered his arm obsequiously to Peschiera. The count was the first to enter, and, humming a gay opera air, took his place by the helm. The two females were next lifted in, and Violante felt her hand pressed almost convulsively by the man who stood by the plank. The rest followed, and in another minute the boat bounded swiftly over the waves towards a vessel that lay several furlongs adown the river, and apart from all the meaner craft that crowded the stream. The stars struggled pale through the foggy atmosphere; not a word was heard within the boat,—no sound save the regular splash of the oars. The count paused from his lively tune, and gathering round him the ample fold of his fur pelisse, seemed absorbed in thought. Even by the imperfect light of the stars, Peschiera's face wore an air of sovereign triumph. The result had justified that careless and insolent confidence in himself and in fortune, which was the most prominent feature in the character of the man, who, both bravo and gamester, had played against the world with his rapier in one hand and cogged dice in the other. Violante, once in a vessel filled by his own men, was irretrievably in his power. Even her father must feel grateful to learn that the captive of Peschiera had saved name and repute in becoming Peschiera's wife. Even the pride of sex in Violante herself must induce her to confirm what Peschiera, of course, intended to state, — namely, that she was a willing partner in a bridegroom's schemes of flight towards the altar rather than the poor victim of a betrayer, and receiving his hand but from his mercy. He saw his fortune secured, his success envied, his very character rehabilitated by his splendid nuptials. Ambition began to mingle with his dreams of pleasure and

pomp. What post in the Court or the State too high for the aspirations of one who had evinced the most incontestable talent for active life,—the talent to succeed in all that the will had undertaken? Thus mused the count, half-forgetful of the present, and absorbed in the golden future, till he was aroused by a loud hail from the vessel and the bustle on board the boat, as the sailors caught at the rope flung forth to them. He then rose and moved towards Violante. But the man who was still in charge of her passed the count lightly, half-leading, half-carrying his passive prisoner. "Pardon, Excellency," said the man, in Italian, "but the boat is crowded, and rocks so much that your aid would but disturb our footing." Before Peschiera could reply, Violante was already on the steps of the vessel, and the count paused till, with elated smile, he saw her safely standing on the deck. Beatrice followed, and then Peschiera himself; but when the Italians in his train also thronged towards the sides of the boat, two of the sailors got before them, and let go the rope, while the other two plied their oars vigorously, and pulled back towards shore. The Italians burst into an amazed and indignant volley of execrations. "Silence," said the sailor who had stood by the plank, "we obey orders. If you are not quiet, we shall upset the boat. *We* can swim; Heaven and Monsignore San Giacomo pity you if you cannot!"

Meanwhile, as Peschiera leaped upon deck, a flood of light poured upon him from lifted torches. That light streamed full on the face and form of a man of commanding stature, whose arm was around Violante, and whose dark eyes flashed upon the count more luminously than the torches. On one side this man stood the Austrian prince; on the other side (a cloak, and a profusion of false dark locks, at his feet) stood Lord L'Estrange, his arms folded, and his lips curved by a smile in which the ironical humour native to the man was tempered with a calm and supreme disdain. The count strove to speak, but his voice faltered.

All around him looked ominous and hostile. He saw many Italian faces, but they scowled at him with vindictive hate; in the rear were English mariners, peering curiously over the

shoulders of the foreigners, and with a broad grin on their open countenances. Suddenly, as the count thus stood perplexed, cowering, stupefied, there burst from all the Italians present a hoot of unutterable scorn, "Il traditore! il traditore!" (the traitor! the traitor!)

The count was brave, and at the cry he lifted his head with a certain majesty.

At that moment Harley, raising his hand as if to silence the hoot, came forth from the group by which he had been hitherto standing, and towards him the count advanced with a bold stride.

"What trick is this?" he said, in French, fiercely. "I divine that it is you whom I can single out for explanation and atonement."

"*Pardieu, Monsieur le Comte,*" answered Harley, in the same language, which lends itself so well to polished sarcasm and high-bred enmity, "let us distinguish. Explanation should come from me, I allow; but atonement I have the honour to resign to yourself. This vessel —"

"Is mine!" cried the count. "Those men, who insult me, should be in my pay."

"The men in your pay, *Monsieur le Comte*, are on shore, drinking success to your voyage. But, anxious still to procure you the gratification of being amongst your own countrymen, those whom I have taken into my pay are still better Italians than the pirates whose place they supply; perhaps not such good sailors; but then I have taken the liberty to add to the equipment of a vessel which cost me too much to risk lightly, some stout English seamen, who are mariners more practised than even your pirates. Your grand mistake, *Monsieur le Comte*, is in thinking that the 'Flying Dutchman' is yours. With many apologies for interfering with your intention to purchase it, I beg to inform you that Lord Spendquick has kindly sold it to me. Nevertheless, *Monsieur le Comte*, for the next few weeks I place it — men and all — at your service."

Peschiera smiled scornfully.

"I thank your Lordship; but since I presume that I shall

no longer have the travelling companion who alone could make the voyage attractive, I shall return to shore, and will simply request you to inform me at what hour you can receive the friend whom I shall depute to discuss that part of the question yet untouched, and to arrange that the atonement, whether it be due from me or yourself, may be rendered as satisfactory as you have condescended to make the explanation."

"Let not that vex you, *Monsieur le Comte*; the atonement is, in much, made already; so anxious have I been to forestall all that your nice sense of honour would induce so complete a gentleman to desire. You have ensnared a young heiress, it is true; but you see that it was only to restore her to the arms of her father. You have juggled an illustrious kinsman out of his heritage; but you have voluntarily come on board this vessel, first, to enable his Highness the Prince Von —, of whose rank at the Austrian Court you are fully aware, to state to your emperor that he himself has been witness of the manner in which you interpreted his Imperial Majesty's assent to your nuptials with a child of one of the first subjects in his Italian realm; and, next, to commence by an excursion to the seas of the Baltic the sentence of banishment which I have no doubt will accompany the same act that restores to the chief of your House his lands and his honours."

The count started.

"That restoration," said the Austrian prince, who had advanced to Harley's side, "I already guarantee. Disgrace that you are, Giulio Franzini, to the nobles of the Empire, I will not leave my royal master till his hand strike your name from the roll. I have here your own letters, to prove that your kinsman was duped by yourself into the revolt which you would have headed as a Catiline, if it had not better suited your nature to betray it as a Judas. In ten days from this time, these letters will be laid before the emperor and his Council."

"Are you satisfied, *Monsieur le Comte*," said Harley, "with your atonement so far? If not, I have procured you the occasion to render it yet more complete. Before you stands the

kinsman you have wronged. He knows now, that though, for a while, you ruined his fortunes, you failed to sully his hearth. His heart can grant you pardon, and hereafter his hand may give you alms. Kneel then, Giulio Franzini,—kneel at the feet of Alphonso, Duke of Serrano.”

The above dialogue had been in French, which only a few of the Italians present understood, and that imperfectly; but at the name with which Harley concluded his address to the count, a simultaneous cry from those Italians broke forth.

“Alphonso the Good! Alphonso the Good! *Viva, viva*, the good Duke of Serrano!”

And, forgetful even of the count, they crowded round the tall form of Riccabocca, striving who should first kiss his hand, the very hem of his garment.

Riccabocca's eyes overflowed. The gaunt exile seemed transfigured into another and more kingly man. An inexpressible dignity invested him. He stretched forth his arms, as if to bless his countrymen. Even that rude cry, from humble men, exiles like himself, consoled him for years of banishment and penury.

“Thanks, thanks,” he continued; “thanks! Some day or other, you will all perhaps return with me to the beloved land!”

The Austrian prince bowed his head, as if in assent to the prayer.

“Giulio Franzini,” said the Duke of Serrano, — for so we may now call the threadbare recluse of the Casino, — “had this last villanous design of yours been allowed by Providence, think you that there is one spot on earth on which the ravisher could have been saved from a father's arm? But now, Heaven has been more kind. In this hour let me imitate its mercy;” and with relaxing brow the duke mildly drew near to his guilty kinsman.

From the moment the Austrian prince had addressed him, the count had preserved a profound silence, showing neither repentance nor shame. Gathering himself up, he had stood firm, glaring round him like one at bay. But as the duke now approached, he waved his hand, and exclaimed, “Back,

pedant, back; you have not triumphed yet. And you, prating German, tell your tales to our emperor. I shall be by his throne to answer,—if, indeed, you escape from the meeting to which I will force you by the way.” He spoke, and made a rush towards the side of the vessel. But Harley’s quick wit had foreseen the count’s intention, and Harley’s quick eye had given the signal by which it was frustrated. Seized in the gripe of his own watchful and indignant countrymen, just as he was about to plunge into the stream, Peschiera was dragged back, pinioned down. Then the expression of his whole countenance changed; the desperate violence of the in-born gladiator broke forth. His great strength enabled him to break loose more than once, to dash more than one man to the floor of the deck; but at length, overpowered by numbers, though still struggling, all dignity, all attempt at presence of mind gone, uttering curses the most plebeian, gnashing his teeth, and foaming at the mouth, nothing seemed left of the brilliant Lothario but the coarse fury of the fierce natural man.

Then still preserving that air and tone of exquisite imperturbable irony which the highest comedian might have sought to imitate in vain, Harley bowed low to the storming count.

“Adieu, Monsieur le Comte, adieu! The vessel which you have honoured me by entering is bound to Norway. The Italians who accompany you were sent by yourself into exile, and, in return, they now kindly promise to enliven you with their society, whenever you feel somewhat tired of your own. Conduct the count to his cabin. Gently there, gently. Adieu, Monsieur le Comte, adieu! et bon voyage.”

Harley turned lightly on his heel, as Peschiera, in spite of his struggles, was now fairly carried down to the cabin.

“A trick for the trickster,” said L’Estrange to the Austrian prince. “The revenge of a farce on the would-be tragedian.”

“More than that,—he is ruined.”

“And ridiculous,” quoth Harley. “I should like to see his look when they land him in Norway.” Harley then passed towards the centre of the vessel, by which, hitherto partially

concealed by the sailors, who were now busily occupied, stood Beatrice,— Frank Hazeldean, who had first received her on entering the vessel, standing by her side; and Leonard, a little apart from the two, in quiet observation of all that had passed around him. Beatrice appeared but little to heed Frank; her dark eyes were lifted to the dim starry skies, and her lips were moving as if in prayer; yet her young lover was speaking to her in great emotion, low and rapidly.

“No, no, do not think for a moment that we suspect you, Beatrice. I will answer for your honour with my life. Oh, why will you turn from me; why will you not speak?”

“A moment later,” said Beatrice, softly. “Give me one moment yet.” She passed slowly and falteringly towards Leonard, placed her hand, that trembled, on his arm, and led him aside to the verge of the vessel. Frank, startled by her movement, made a step as if to follow, and then stopped short and looked on, but with a clouded and doubtful countenance. Harley’s smile had gone, and his eye was also watchful.

It was but a few words that Beatrice spoke, it was but a sentence or so that Leonard answered; and then Beatrice extended her hand, which the young poet bent over, and kissed in silence. She lingered an instant; and even by the starlight, Harley noted the blush that overspread her face. The blush faded as Beatrice returned to Frank. Lord L’Estrange would have retired,— she signed to him to stay.

“My Lord,” she said, very firmly, “I cannot accuse you of harshness to my sinful and unhappy brother. His offence might perhaps deserve a heavier punishment than that which you inflict with such playful scorn. But whatever his penance, contempt now or poverty later, I feel that his sister should be by his side to share it. I am not innocent if he be guilty; and, wreck though he be, nothing else on this dark sea of life is now left to me to cling to. Hush, my Lord! I shall not leave this vessel. All that I entreat of you is, to order your men to respect my brother, since a woman will be by his side.”

“But, Marchesa, this cannot be; and —”

"Beatrice, Beatrice — and me! — our betrothal? Do you forget me?" cried Frank, in reproachful agony.

"No, young and too noble lover; I shall remember you ever in my prayers. But listen. I have been deceived, — hurried on, I might say, by others, but also, and far more, by my own mad and blinded heart, — deceived, hurried on, to wrong you and to belie myself. My shame burns into me when I think that I could have inflicted on you the just anger of your family, linked you to my own ruined fortunes, — my own —"

"Your own generous, loving heart! — that is all I asked!" cried Frank. "Cease, cease! that heart is mine still!"

Tears gushed from the Italian's eyes.

"Englishman, I never loved you; this heart was dead to you, and it will be dead to all else forever. Farewell. You will forget me sooner than you think for, — sooner than I shall forget you, as a friend, as a brother — if brothers had natures as tender and as kind as yours! Now, my Lord, will you give me your arm? I would join the count."

"Stay; one word, Madame," said Frank, very pale, and through his set teeth, but calmly, and with a pride on his brow which had never before dignified its habitual careless expression, — "one word. I may not be worthy of you in anything else, but an honest love, that never doubted, never suspected, that would have clung to you though all the world were against, — such a love makes the meanest man of worth. One word, frank and open. By all that you hold most sacred in your creed, did you speak the truth when you said that you never loved me?"

Beatrice bent down her head; she was abashed before this manly nature that she had so deceived, and perhaps till then undervalued.

"Pardon, pardon," she said, in reluctant accents, half-choked by the rising of a sob.

At her hesitation, Frank's face lighted as if with sudden hope. She raised her eyes, and saw the change in him, then glanced where Leonard stood, mournful and motionless. She shivered, and added firmly, —

"Yes, pardon; for I spoke the truth, and I had no heart to give. It might have been as wax to another,—it was of granite to you." She paused, and muttered inly, "Granite, and — broken!"

Frank said not a word more. He stood rooted to the spot, not even gazing after Beatrice as she passed on, leaning on the arm of Lord L'Estrange. He then walked resolutely away, and watched the boat that the men were now lowering from the side of the vessel. Beatrice stopped when she came near the place where Violante stood, answering in agitated whispers her father's anxious questions. As she stopped, she leaned more heavily upon Harley. "It is your arm that trembles now, Lord L'Estrange," said she, with a mournful smile, and, quitting him ere he could answer, she bowed down her head meekly before Violante. "You have pardoned me already," she said, in a tone that reached only the girl's ear, "and my last words shall not be of the past. I see your future spread bright before me under those steadfast stars. Love still; hope and trust. These are the last words of her who will soon die to the world. Fair maid, they are prophetic!"

Violante shrunk back to her father's breast, and there hid her glowing face, resigning her hand to Beatrice, who pressed it to her bosom. The marchesa then came back to Harley, and disappeared with him in the interior of the vessel.

When Harley again came on deck, he seemed much flurried and disturbed. He kept aloof from the duke and Violante, and was the last to enter the boat, that was now lowered into the water.

As he and his companions reached the land, they saw the vessel in movement, gliding slowly down the river.

"Courage, Leonard, courage!" murmured Harley. "You grieve, and nobly. But you have shunned the worst and most vulgar deceit in civilized life; you have not simulated love. Better that yon poor lady should be, awhile, the sufferer from a harsh truth, than the eternal martyr of a flattering lie! Alas, my Leonard! with the love of the poet's dream are linked only the Graces; with the love of the human heart come the awful Fates!"

"My Lord, poets do not dream when they love. You will learn how the feelings are deep in proportion as the fancies are vivid, when you read that confession of genius and woe which I have left in your hands."

Leonard turned away. Harley's gaze followed him with inquiring interest, and suddenly encountered the soft dark grateful eyes of Violante. "The Fates, the Fates!" murmured Harley.

CHAPTER IX.

WE are at Norwood in the sage's drawing-room. Violante has long since retired to rest. Harley, who had accompanied the father and daughter to their home, is still conversing with the former.

"Indeed, my dear Duke," said Harley —

"Hush, hush! *Diavolo*, don't call me Duke yet; I am at home here once more as Dr. Riccabocca."

"My dear doctor, then, allow me to assure you that you overrate my claim to your thanks. Your old friends, Leonard and Frank Hazeldean, must come in for their share. Nor is the faithful Giacomo to be forgotten."

"Continue your explanation."

"In the first place, I learned, through Frank, that one Baron Levy, a certain fashionable money-lender, and general ministrant to the affairs of fine gentlemen, was just about to purchase a yacht from Lord Spendquick on behalf of the count. A short interview with Spendquick enabled me to outbid the usurer, and conclude a bargain by which the yacht became mine,—a promise to assist Spendquick in extricating himself from the claws of the money-lender (which I trust to do by reconciling him with his father, who is a man of liberality and sense) made Spendquick readily connive at my scheme for outwitting the enemy. He allowed Levy to suppose that the count might take possession of the vessel; but

affecting an engagement, and standing out for terms, postponed the final settlement of the purchase-money till the next day. I was thus master of the vessel, which I felt sure was destined to serve Peschiera's infamous design. But it was my business not to alarm the count's suspicions; I therefore permitted the pirate crew he had got together to come on board. I knew I could get rid of them when necessary. Meanwhile, Frank undertook to keep close to the count until he could see and cage within his lodgings the servant whom Peschiera had commissioned to attend his sister. If I could but apprehend this servant, I had a sanguine hope that I could discover and free your daughter before Peschiera could even profane her with his presence. But Frank, alas! was no pupil of Machiavelli. Perhaps the count detected his secret thoughts under his open countenance, perhaps merely wished to get rid of a companion very much in his way; but, at all events, he contrived to elude our young friend as cleverly as you or I could have done,—told him that Beatrice herself was at Roehampton, had borrowed the count's carriage to go there, volunteered to take Frank to the house, took him. Frank found himself in a drawing-room; and after waiting a few minutes, while the count went out on pretence of seeing his sister, in pirouetted a certain distinguished opera-dancer! Meanwhile the count was fast back on the road to London, and Frank had to return as he could. He then hunted for the count everywhere, and saw him no more. It was late in the day when Frank found me out with this news. I became seriously alarmed. Peschiera might perhaps learn my counter-scheme with the yacht, or he might postpone sailing until he had terrified or entangled Violante into some — In short, everything was to be dreaded from a man of the count's temper. I had no clew to the place to which your daughter was taken, no excuse to arrest Peschiera, no means even of learning where he was. He had not returned to Mivart's. The Police was at fault, and useless, except in one valuable piece of information. They told me where some of your countrymen, whom Peschiera's perfidy had sent into exile, were to be found. I commissioned Gia-

como to seek these men out, and induce them to man the vessel. It might be necessary, should Peschiera or his confidential servants come aboard, after we had expelled or drawn off the pirate crew, that they should find Italians whom they might well mistake for their own hirelings. To these foreigners I added some English sailors who had before served in the same vessel, and on whom Spendquick assured me I could rely. Still these precautions only availed in case Peschiera should resolve to sail, and defer till then all machinations against his captives. While, amidst my fears and uncertainties, I was struggling still to preserve presence of mind, and rapidly discussing with the Austrian prince if any other steps could be taken, or if our sole resource was to repair to the vessel and take the chance of what might ensue, Leonard suddenly and quietly entered my room. You know his countenance, in which joy or sadness is not betrayed so much by the evidence of the passions as by variations in the intellectual expression. It was but by the clearer brow and the steadier eye that I saw he had good tidings to impart."

"Ah," said Riccabocca, — for so, obeying his own request, we will yet call the sage, — "ah, I early taught that young man the great lesson inculcated by Helvetius. 'All our errors arise from our ignorance or our passions.' Without ignorance and without passions, we should be serene, all-penetrating intelligences."

"Mopsticks," quoth Harley, "have neither ignorance nor passions; but as for their intelligence —"

"Pshaw!" interrupted Riccabocca, — "proceed."

"Leonard had parted from us some hours before. I had commissioned him to call at Madame di Negra's, and, as he was familiarly known to her servants, seek to obtain quietly all the information he could collect, and, at all events, procure (what in my haste I had failed to do) the name and description of the man who had driven her out in the morning, and make what use he judged best of every hint he could gather or glean that might aid our researches. Leonard only succeeded in learning the name and description of the coachman, whom he recognized as one Beppo, to whom she had

often given orders in his presence. None could say where he then could be found, if not at the count's hotel. Leonard went next to that hotel. The man had not been there all the day. While revolving what next he should do, his eye caught sight of your intended son-in-law, gliding across the opposite side of the street. One of those luminous, inspiring conjectures, which never occur to you philosophers, had from the first guided Leonard to believe that Randal Leslie was mixed up in this villanous affair."

"Ha! He?" cried Riccabocca. "Impossible! For what interest, what object?"

"I cannot tell, neither could Leonard; but we had both formed the same conjecture. Brief: Leonard resolved to follow Randal Leslie, and track all his movements. He did then follow him, unobserved,—and at a distance, first to Audley Egerton's house, then to Eaton Square, thence to a house in Bruton Street, which Leonard ascertained to be Baron Levy's. Suspicious that, my dear sage?"

"*Diavolo*, yes!" said Riccabocca, thoughtfully.

"At Levy's, Randal stayed till dusk. He then came out, with his cat-like, stealthy step, and walked quickly into the neighbourhood of Leicester Square. Leonard saw him enter one of those small hotels which are appropriated to foreigners. Wild, outlandish fellows were loitering about the door and in the street. Leonard divined that the count or the count's confidants were there."

"If that can be proved," cried Riccabocca, "if Randal could have been thus in communication with Peschiera, could have connived at such perfidy, I am released from my promise. Oh, to prove it!"

"Proof will come later, if we are on the right track. Let me go on. While waiting near the door of this hotel, Beppo himself, the very man Leonard was in search of, came forth, and, after speaking a few words to some of the loitering foreigners, walked briskly towards Piccadilly. Leonard here resigned all further heed of Leslie, and gave chase to Beppo, whom he recognized at a glance. Coming up to him, he said quietly, 'I have a letter for the Marchesa di Negra. She told

me I was to send it to her by you. I have been searching for you the whole day.' The man fell into the trap, and the more easily, because — as he since owned in excuse for a simplicity which, I dare say, weighed on his conscience more than any of the thousand-and-one crimes he may have committed in the course of his illustrious life — he had been employed by the marchesa as a spy upon Leonard, and, with an Italian's acumen in affairs of the heart, detected her secret."

"What secret?" asked the innocent sage.

"Her love for the handsome young poet. I betray that secret, in order to give her some slight excuse for becoming Peschiera's tool. She believed Leonard to be in love with your daughter, and jealousy urged her to treason. Violante, no doubt, will explain this to you. Well, the man fell into the trap. 'Give me the letter, Signor, and quick.'

" 'It is at a hotel close by; come there, and you will have a guinea for your trouble.'

"So Leonard walked our gentleman into my hotel; and having taken him into my dressing-room, turned the key and there left him. On learning this capture, the prince and myself hastened to see our prisoner. He was at first sullen and silent; but when the prince disclosed his rank and name (you know the mysterious terror the meaner Italians feel for an Austrian magnate), his countenance changed, and his courage fell. What with threats and what with promises, we soon obtained all that we sought to know; and an offered bribe, which I calculated at ten times the amount the rogue could ever expect to receive from his spendthrift master, finally bound him cheerfully to our service, soul and body. Thus we learned the dismal place to which your noble daughter had been so perfidiously ensnared. We learned also that the count had not yet visited her, hoping much from the effect that prolonged incarceration might have in weakening her spirit and inducing her submission. Peschiera was to go to the house at midnight, thence to transport her to the vessel. Beppo had received orders to bring the carriage to Leicester Square, where Peschiera would join him. The count (as

Leonard surmised) had taken skulking refuge at the hotel in which Randal Leslie had disappeared. The prince, Leonard, Frank (who was then in the hotel), and myself held a short council. Should we go at once to the house, and, by the help of the police, force an entrance, and rescue your daughter? This was a very hazardous resource. The abode, which, at various times, had served for the hiding-place of men haunted by the law, abounded, according to our informant, in subterranean vaults and secret passages, and had more than one outlet on the river. At our first summons at the door, therefore, the ruffians within might not only escape themselves, but carry off their prisoner. The door was strong, and before our entrance could be forced, all trace of her we sought might be lost. Again, too, the prince was desirous of bringing Peschiera's guilty design home to him,—anxious to be able to state to the emperor, and to the great minister his kinsman, that he himself had witnessed the count's vile abuse of the emperor's permission to wed your daughter. In short, while I only thought of Violante, the prince thought also of her father's recall to his dukedom. Yet, still to leave Violante in that terrible house, even for an hour, a few minutes, subjected to the actual presence of Peschiera, unguarded save by the feeble and false woman who had betrayed and might still desert her—how contemplate that fearful risk? What might not happen in the interval between Peschiera's visit to the house and his appearance with his victim on the vessel? An idea flashed on me: Beppo was to conduct the count to the house; if I could accompany Beppo in disguise, enter the house, myself be present?—I rushed back to our informant, now become our agent; I found the plan still more feasible than I had at first supposed. Beppo had asked the count's permission to bring with him a brother accustomed to the sea, and who wished to quit England. I might personate that brother. You know that the Italian language, in most of its dialects and varieties of *patois*—Genoese, Piedmontese, Venetian—is as familiar to me as Addison's English! Alas! rather more so. Presto! the thing was settled. I felt my heart, from that moment, as light as a feather, and my sense

as keen as the dart which a feather wings. My plans now were formed in a breath, and explained in a sentence. It was right that you should be present on board the vessel, not only to witness your foe's downfall, but to receive your child in a father's arms. Leonard set out to Norwood for you, cautioned not to define too precisely for what object you were wanted, till on board.

"Frank, accompanied by Beppo (for there was yet time for these preparations before midnight), repaired to the yacht, taking Giacomo by the way. There our new ally, familiar to most of that piratical crew, and sanctioned by the presence of Frank, as the count's friend and prospective brother-in-law, told Peschiera's hirelings that they were to quit the vessel, and wait on shore under Giacomo's auspices till further orders; and as soon as the decks were cleared of these ruffians (save a few left to avoid suspicion, and who were afterwards safely stowed down in the hold), and as soon as Giacomo had lodged his convoy in a public house, where he quitted them drinking his health over unlimited rations of grog, your inestimable servant quietly shipped on board the Italians pressed into the service, and Frank took charge of the English sailors.

"The prince, promising to be on board in due time, then left me to make arrangements for his journey to Vienna by the dawn. I hastened to a masquerade warehouse, where, with the help of an ingenious stagewright artificer, I disguised myself into a most thorough-paced-looking cut-throat, and then waited the return of my friend Beppo with the most perfect confidence."

"Yet, if that rascal had played false, all these precautions were lost. *Cospetto!* you were not wise," said the prudent philosopher.

"Very likely not. You would have been so wise, that by this time your daughter would have been lost to you forever."

"But why not employ the police?"

"First, Because I had already employed them to little purpose; secondly, Because I no longer wanted them; thirdly, Because to use them for my final catastrophe would be to drag

your name, and your daughter's perhaps, before a police court, — at all events, before the tribunal of public gossip; and lastly, Because, having decided upon the proper punishment, it had too much of equity to be quite consistent with law; and in forcibly seizing a man's person, and shipping him off to Norway, my police would have been sadly in the way. Certainly my plan rather savours of Lope de Vega than of Blackstone. However, you see success atones for all irregularities. I resume: Beppo came back in time to narrate all the arrangements that had been made, and to inform me that a servant from the count had come on board just as our new crew were assembled there, to order the boat to be at the place where we found it. The servant it was deemed prudent to detain and secure. Giacomo undertook to manage the boat. I am nearly at the close of my story. Sure of my disguise, I got on the coach-box with Beppo. The count arrived at the spot appointed, and did not even honour myself with a question or glance. 'Your brother?' he said to Beppo; 'one might guess that; he has the family likeness. Not a handsome race yours! Drive on.'

"We arrived at the house. I dismounted to open the carriage-door. The count gave me one look.

"'Beppo says you have known the sea.'

"'Excellency, yes. I am a Genoese.'

"'Ha! how is that? Beppo is a Lombard.' — Admire the readiness with which I redeemed my blunder.

"'Excellency, it pleased Heaven that Beppo should be born in Lombardy, and then to remove my respected parents to Genoa, at which city they were so kindly treated that my mother, in common gratitude, was bound to increase its population. It was all she could do, poor woman. You see she did her best.'

"The count smiled, and said no more. The door opened, I followed him; your daughter can tell you the rest."

"And you risked your life in that den of miscreants! Noble friend!"

"Risked my life,—no; but I risked the count's. There was one moment when my hand was on my trigger, and my

soul very near the sin of justifiable homicide. But my tale is done. The count is now on the river, and will soon be on the salt seas,—though not bound to Norway, as I had first intended. I could not inflict that frigid voyage on his sister. So the men have orders to cruise about for six days, keeping aloof from shore, and they will then land the count and the marchesa, by boat, on the French coast. That delay will give time for the prince to arrive at Vienna before the count could follow him.”

“Would he have that audacity?”

“Do him more justice! Audacity, faith! he does not want for that. But I dreaded not his appearance at Vienna with such evidence against him. I dreaded his encountering the prince on the road, and forcing a duel, before his character was so blasted that the prince could refuse it; and the count is a dead shot of course,—all such men are!”

“He will return, and you —”

“I! Oh, never fear; he has had enough of me. And now, my dear friend,—now that Violante is safe once more under your own roof; now that my honoured mother must long ere this have been satisfied by Leonard, who left us to go to her, that our success has been achieved without danger, and, what she will value almost as much, without scandal; now that your foe is powerless as a reed floating on the water towards its own rot, and the Prince Von — is perhaps about to enter his carriage on the road to Dover, charged with the mission of restoring to Italy her worthiest son,—let me dismiss you to your own happy slumbers, and allow me to wrap myself in my cloak, and snatch a short sleep on the sofa, till yonder gray dawn has mellowed into riper day. My eyes are heavy, and if you stay here three minutes longer, I shall be out of reach of hearing, in the land of dreams. *Buona notte!*”

“But there is a bed prepared for you.”

Harley shook his head in dissent, and composed himself at length on the sofa.

Riccabocca, bending, wrapped the cloak round his guest, kissed him on the forehead, and crept out of the room to re-

join Jemima, who still sat up for him, nervously anxious to learn from him those explanations which her considerate affection would not allow her to ask from the agitated and exhausted Violante. "Not in bed!" cried the sage, on seeing her. "Have you no feelings of compassion for my son that is to be? Just, too, when there is a reasonable probability that we can afford a son?"

Riccabocca here laughed merrily, and his wife threw herself on his shoulder, and cried for joy.

But no sleep fell on the lids of Harley L'Estrange. He started up when his host had left him, and paced the apartment, with noiseless but rapid strides. All whim and levity had vanished from his face, which, by the light of the dawn, seemed death-like pale. On that pale face there was all the struggle and all the anguish of passion.

"These arms have clasped her," he murmured; "these lips have inhaled her breath! I am under the same roof, and she is saved,—saved evermore from danger and from penury, and forever divided from me. Courage, courage! Oh, honour, duty; and thou, dark memory of the past,—thou that didst pledge love at least to a grave,—support, defend me! Can I be so weak!"

The sun was in the wintry skies when Harley stole from the house. No one was stirring except Giacomo, who stood by the threshold of the door, which he had just unbarred, feeding the house-dog. "Good-day," said the servant, smiling. "The dog has not been of much use, but I don't think the padrone will henceforth grudge him a breakfast. I shall take him to Italy, and marry him there, in the hope of improving the breed of our native Lombard dogs."

"Ah," said Harley, "you will soon leave our cold shores. May sunshine settle on you all!" He paused, and looked up at the closed windows wistfully.

"The signorina sleeps there," said Giacomo, in a husky voice, "just over the room in which you slept."

"I knew it," muttered Harley. "An instinct told me of it. Open the gate; I must go home. My excuses to your lord, and to all."

He turned a deaf ear to Giacomo's entreaties to stay till at least the signorina was up,—the signorina whom he had saved. Without trusting himself to speak further, he quitted the demesne, and walked with swift strides towards London.

CHAPTER X.

HARLEY had not long reached his hotel, and was still seated before his untasted breakfast, when Mr. Randal Leslie was announced. Randal, who was in the firm belief that Violante was now on the wide seas with Peschiera, entered, looking the very personation of anxiety and fatigue. For, like the great Cardinal Richelieu, Randal had learned the art how to make good use of his own delicate and somewhat sickly aspect. The cardinal, when intent on some sanguinary scheme requiring unusual vitality and vigour, contrived to make himself look a harmless sufferer at death's door. And Randal, whose nervous energies could at that moment have whirled him from one end of this huge metropolis to the other, with a speed that would have outstripped a prize pedestrian, now sank into a chair with a jaded weariness that no mother could have seen without compassion. He seemed since the last night to have galloped towards the last stage of consumption.

"Have you discovered no trace, my Lord? Speak, speak!"

"Speak! certainly. I am too happy to relieve your mind, Mr. Leslie. What fools we were! Ha, ha!"

"Fools — how?" faltered Randal.

"Of course; the young lady was at her father's house all the time."

"Eh? what?"

"And is there now."

"It is not possible!" said Randal, in the hollow, dreamy tone of a somnambulist. "At her father's house, at Norwood! Are you sure?"

"Sure."

Randal made a desperate and successful effort at self-control. "Heaven be praised!" he cried. "And just as I had begun to suspect the count, the marchesa; for I find that neither of them slept at home last night; and Levy told me that the count had written to him, requesting the baron to discharge his bills, as he should be for some time absent from England."

"Indeed! Well, that is nothing to us,—very much to Baron Levy, if he executes his commission, and discharges the bills. What! are you going already?"

"Do you ask such a question? How can I stay? I must go to Norwood,—must see Violante with my own eyes! Forgive my emotion — I — I —"

Randal snatched at his hat and hurried away. The low scornful laugh of Harley followed him as he went.

"I have no more doubt of his guilt than Leonard has. Violante at least shall not be the prize of that thin-lippe knave. What strange fascination can he possess, that he should thus bind to him the two men I value most,—Audley Egerton and Alphonso di Serrano? Both so wise too! — one in books, one in action. And both suspicious men! While I, so imprudently trustful and frank — Ah, that is the reason; our natures are antipathetic; cunning, simulation, falsehood, I have no mercy, no pardon for these. Woe to all hypocrites if I were a grand Inquisitor!"

"Mr. Richard Avenel," said the waiter, throwing open the door.

Harley caught at the arm of the chair on which he sat, and grasped it nervously, while his eyes became fixed intently on the form of the gentleman who now advanced into the room. He rose with an effort.

"Mr. Avenel!" he said falteringly. "Did I hear your name aright? Avenel?"

"Richard Avenel, at your service, my Lord," answered Dick. "My family is not unknown to you; and I am not ashamed of my family, though my parents were small Lansmere tradesfolks, and I am — ahem! — a citizen of the world, and well-to-do!" added Dick, dropping his kid gloves into

his hat, and then placing the hat on the table, with the air of an old acquaintance who wishes to make himself at home.

Lord L'Estrange bowed and said, as he reseated himself (Dick being firmly seated already), "You are most welcome, sir; and if there be anything I can do for one of your name —"

"Thank you, my Lord," interrupted Dick. "I want nothing of any man. A bold word to say; but I say it. Nevertheless, I should not have presumed to call on your Lordship, unless, indeed, you had done me the honour to call first at my house, Eaton Square, No. —. I should not have presumed to call if it had not been on business,— public business, I may say — NATIONAL business!"

Harley bowed again. A faint smile flitted for a moment to his lip, but, vanishing, gave way to a mournful, absent expression of countenance, as he scanned the handsome features before him, and, perhaps, masculine and bold though they were, still discovered something of a family likeness to one whose beauty had once been his ideal of female loveliness; for suddenly he stretched forth his hand, and said, with more than his usual cordial sweetness, "Business or not business, let us speak to each other as friends,— for the sake of a name that takes me back to Lansmere, to my youth. I listen to you with interest."

Richard Avenel, much surprised by this unexpected kindness, and touched, he knew not why, by the soft and melancholy tone of Harley's voice, warmly pressed the hand held out to him; and seized with a rare fit of shyness, coloured and coughed and hemmed and looked first down, then aside, before he could find the words which were generally ready enough at his command.

"You are very good, Lord L'Estrange; nothing can be handsomer. I feel it here, my Lord," striking his buff waistcoat, — "I do, 'pon my honour. But not to waste your time (time 's money), I come to the point. It is about the borough of Lansmere. Your family interest is very strong in that borough; but excuse me if I say that I don't think you are aware that I too have cooked up a pretty considerable interest

on the other side. No offence,—opinions are free. And the popular tide runs strong with us — I mean with *me* — at the impending crisis,—that is, at the next election. Now, I have a great respect for the earl your father, and so have those who brought me into the world — my father, John, was always a regular good Blue,—and my respect for yourself since I came into this room has gone up in the market a very great rise indeed,—considerable. So I should just like to see if we could set our heads together, and settle the borough between us two, in a snug private way, as public men ought to do when they get together, nobody else by, and no necessity for that sort of humbug, which is so common in this rotten old country. Eh, my Lord?”

“Mr. Avenel,” said Harley, slowly, recovering himself from the abstraction with which he had listened to Dick’s earlier sentences. “I fear I do not quite understand you; but I have no other interest in the next election for the borough of Lansmere than as may serve one whom, whatever be your politics, you must acknowledge to be —”

“A humbug!”

“Mr. Avenel, you cannot mean the person I mean. I speak of one of the first statesmen of our time,—of Mr. Audley Egerton, of —”

“A stiff-necked, pompous —”

“My earliest and dearest friend.”

The rebuke, though gently said, sufficed to silence Dick for a moment; and when he spoke again, it was in an altered tone.

“I beg your pardon, my Lord, I am sure. Of course, I can say nothing disrespectful of your friend,—very sorry that he is your friend. In that case, I am almost afraid that nothing is to be done. But Mr. Audley Egerton has not a chance. Let me convince you of this.” And Dick pulled out a little book, bound neatly in red.

“Canvass book, my Lord. I am no aristocrat. I don’t pretend to carry a free and independent constituency in my breeches’ pocket. Heaven forbid! But as a practical man of business, what I do is done properly. Just look at this book.

Well kept, eh? Names, promises, inclinations, public opinions, and private interests of every individual Lansmere elector! Now, as one man of honour to another, I show you this book, and I think you will see that we have a clear majority of at least eighty votes as against Mr. Egerton."

"That is your view of the question," said Harley, taking the book and glancing over the names catalogued and ticketed therein. But his countenance became serious as he recognized many names familiar to his boyhood as those of important electors on the Lansmere side, and which he now found transferred to the hostile. "But surely there are persons here in whom you deceive yourself,—old friends of my family, staunch supporters of our party."

"Exactly so. But this new question has turned all old things topsy-turvy. No relying on any friend of yours. No reliance except in this book!" said Dick, slapping the red cover with calm but ominous emphasis.

"Now, what I want to propose is this: Don't let the Lansmere interest be beaten; it would vex the old earl,—go to his heart, I am sure."

Harley nodded.

"And the Lansmere interest need not be beaten, if you'll put up another man instead of this red-tapist. (Beg pardon.) You see I only want to get in one man, you want to get in another. Why not? Now, there's a smart youth,—connection of Mr. Egerton's,—Randal Leslie. I have no objection to him, though he is of your colours. Withdraw Mr. Egerton, and I'll withdraw my second man before it comes to the poll; and so we shall halve the borough slick between us. That's the way to do business,—eh, my Lord?"

"Randal Leslie! Oh, you wish to bring in Mr. Leslie? But he stands with Egerton, not against him."

"Ah," said Dick, smiling as if to himself, "so I hear; and we could bring him in over Egerton without saying a word to you. But all our family respect yours, and so I have wished to do the thing handsome and open. Let the earl and your party be content with young Leslie."

"Young Leslie has spoken to you?"

"Not as to my coming here. Oh, no, that's a secret,—private and confidential, my Lord. And now, to make matters still more smooth, I propose that my man shall be one to your Lordship's own heart. I find you have been very kind to my nephew; does you credit, my Lord,—a wonderful young man, though I say it. I never guessed there was so much in him. Yet all the time he was in my house, he had in his desk the very sketch of an invention that is now saving me from ruin,—from positive ruin,—Baron Levy, the King's Bench, and almighty smash! Now, such a young man ought to be in parliament. I like to bring forward a relation,—that is, when he does one credit; 't is human nature and sacred ties—one's own flesh and blood; and besides, one hand rubs the other, and one leg helps on the other, and relations get on best in the world when they pull together; that is, supposing that they are the proper sort of relations, and pull one on, not down. I had once thought of standing for Lansmere myself,—thought of it very lately. The country wants men like me, I know that; but I have an idea that I had better see to my own business. The country may, or may not, do without me, stupid old thing that she is! But my mill and my new engines—there is no doubt that they cannot do without me. In short, as we are quite alone, and, as I said before, there's no kind of necessity for that sort of humbug which exists when other people are present, provide elsewhere for Mr. Egerton, whom I hate like poison,—I have a right to do that, I suppose, without offence to your Lordship,—and the two youngers, Leonard Fairfield and Randal Leslie, shall be members for the free and independent borough of Lansmere!"

"But does Leonard wish to come into parliament?"

"No, he says not; but that's nonsense. If your Lordship will just signify your wish that he should not lose this noble opportunity to raise himself in life, and get something handsome out of the nation, I'm sure he owes you too much to hesitate,—'specially when 'tis to his own advantage. And besides, one of us Avenels ought to be in parliament; and if I have not the time and learning, and so forth, and he has, why, it stands to reason that he should be the man. And if

he can do something for me one day — not that I want anything — but still a baronetcy or so would be a compliment to British Industry, and be appreciated as such by myself and the public at large, — I say, if he could do something of that sort, it would keep up the whole family; and if he can't, why, I'll forgive him."

"Avenel," said Harley, with that familiar and gracious charm of manner which few ever could resist, "Avenel, if as a great personal favour to myself—to me your fellow-townsmen (I was born at Lansmere)—if I asked you to forego your grudge against Audley Egerton, whatever that grudge be, and not oppose his election, while our party would not oppose your nephew's, could you not oblige me? Come, for the sake of dear Lansmere, and all the old kindly feelings between your family and mine, say 'yes, so shall it be.'"

Richard Avenel was almost melted. He turned away his face; but there suddenly rose to his recollection the scornful brow of Audley Egerton, the lofty contempt with which *he*, then the worshipful Mayor of Screwstown, had been shown out of the minister's office-room; and the blood rushing over his cheeks, he stamped his foot on the floor, and exclaimed angrily, "No; I swore that Audley Egerton should smart for his insolence to me, as sure as my name be Richard Avenel; and all the soft soap in the world will not wash out that oath. So there is nothing for it but for you to withdraw that man, or for me to defeat him. And I would do so, ay, —and in the way that could most gall him, — if it cost me half my fortune. But it will not cost that," said Dick, cooling, "nor anything like it; for when the popular tide runs in one's favour, 'tis astonishing how cheap an election may be. It will cost *him* enough though, and all for nothing, — worse than nothing. Think of it, my Lord."

"I will, Mr. Avenel. And I say, in my turn, that my friendship is as strong as your hate; and that if it costs me, not half, but my whole fortune, Audley Egerton shall come in without a shilling of expense to himself, should we once decide that he stand the contest."

"Very well, my Lord, — very well," said Dick, stiffly, and

drawing on his kid gloves; "we'll see if the aristocracy is always to ride over the free choice of the people in this way. But the people are roused, my Lord. The March of Enlightenment is commenced, the Schoolmaster is abroad, and the British Lion —"

"Nobody here but ourselves, my dear Avenel. Is not this rather what you call — *humbug*?"

Dick started, stared, coloured, and then burst out laughing, "Give us your hand again, my Lord. You are a good fellow, *that* you are. And for your sake —"

"You'll not oppose Egerton?"

"Tooth and nail, tooth and nail!" cried Dick, clapping his hands to his ears, and fairly running out of the room.

There passed over Harley's countenance that change so frequent to it, — more frequent, indeed, to the gay children of the world than those of consistent tempers and uniform habits might suppose. There is many a man whom we call friend, and whose face seems familiar to us as our own; yet, could we but take a glimpse of him when we leave his presence, and he sinks back into his chair alone, we should sigh to see how often the smile on the frankest lip is but a bravery of the drill, only worn when on parade.

What thoughts did the visit of Richard Avenel bequeath to Harley? It were hard to define them.

In his place, an Audley Egerton would have taken some comfort from the visit, would have murmured, "Thank Heaven! I have not to present to the world that terrible man as my brother-in-law." But probably Harley had escaped, in his revery, from Richard Avenel altogether. Even as the slightest incident in the daytime causes our dreams at night, but is itself clean forgotten, so the name, so the look of the visitor, might have sufficed but to influence a vision, as remote from its casual suggester as what we call real life is from that life much more real, that we imagine, or remember, in the haunted chambers of the brain. For what *is* real life? How little the things actually doing around us affect the springs of our sorrow or joy; but the life which our dulness calls romance, — the sentiment, the remembrance, the hope, or the fear, that

are never seen in the toil of our hands, never heard in the jargon on our lips, — from that life all spin, as the spider from its entrails, the web by which we hang in the sunbeam, or glide out of sight into the shelter of home.

“I must not think,” said Harley, rousing himself with a sigh, “either of past or present. Let me hurry on to some fancied future. ‘Happiest are the marriages,’ said the French philosopher, and still says many a sage, ‘in which man asks only the mild companion, and woman but the calm protector.’ I will go to Helen.”

He rose; and as he was about to lock up his escritoire, he remembered the papers which Leonard had requested him to read. He took them from their deposit, with a careless hand, intending to carry them with him to his father’s house. But as his eye fell upon the characters, the hand suddenly trembled, and he recoiled some paces, as if struck by a violent blow. Then, gazing more intently on the writing, a low cry broke from his lips. He reseated himself, and began to read.

CHAPTER XI.

RANDAL—with many misgivings at Lord L’Estrange’s tone, in which he was at no loss to detect a latent irony — proceeded to Norwood. He found Riccabocca exceedingly cold and distant; but he soon brought that sage to communicate the suspicions which Lord L’Estrange had instilled into his mind, and these Randal was as speedily enabled to dispel. He accounted at once for his visits to Levy and Peschiera. Naturally he had sought Levy, an acquaintance of his own, — nay, of Audley Egerton’s, — but whom he knew to be professionally employed by the count. He had succeeded in extracting from the baron Peschiera’s suspicious change of lodgment from Mivart’s Hotel to the purlieus of Leicester Square; had called there on the count, forced an

entrance, openly accused him of abstracting Violante; high words had passed between them, — even a challenge. Randal produced a note from a military friend of his, whom he had sent to the count an hour after quitting the hotel. This note stated that arrangements were made for a meeting near Lord's Cricket Ground, at seven o'clock the next morning. Randal then submitted to Riccabocca another formal memorandum from the same warlike friend, to the purport that Randal and himself had repaired to the ground, and no count had been forthcoming. It must be owned that Randal had taken all suitable precautions to clear himself. Such a man is not to blame for want of invention, if he be sometimes doomed to fail.

"I, then, much alarmed," continued Randal, "hastened to Baron Levy, who informed me that the count had written him word that he should be for some time absent from England. Rushing thence, in despair, to your friend Lord L'Estrange, I heard that your daughter was safe with you. And though, as I have just proved, I would have risked my life against so notorious a duellist as the count, on the mere chance of preserving Violante from his supposed designs, I am rejoiced to think that she had no need of my unskilful arm. But how and why can the count have left England after accepting a challenge? A man so sure of his weapon, too, — reputed to be as fearless of danger as he is blunt in conscience. Explain, — you who know mankind so well, — explain. I cannot."

The philosopher could not resist the pleasure of narrating the detection and humiliation of his foe, the wit, ingenuity, and readiness of his friend. So Randal learned, by little and little, the whole drama of the preceding night. He saw, then, that the exile had all reasonable hope of speedy restoration to rank and wealth. Violante, indeed, would be a brilliant prize, — too brilliant, perhaps, for Randal, but not to be sacrificed without an effort. Therefore wringing convulsively the hand of his meditated father-in-law, and turning away his head as if to conceal his emotions, the ingenuous young suitor faltered forth that now Dr. Riccabocca was so soon to vanish into the Duke di Serrano, he —

Randal Leslie of Rood, born a gentleman, indeed, but of fallen fortunes—had no right to claim the promise which had been given to him while a father had cause to fear for a daughter's future; with the fear ceased the promise. Might Heaven bless father and daughter both!

This address touched both the heart and honour of the exile. Randal Leslie knew his man. And though, before Randal's visit, Riccabocca was not quite so much a philosopher but what he would have been well pleased to have found himself released, by proof of the young man's treachery, from an alliance below the rank to which he had all chance of early restoration, yet no Spaniard was ever more tenacious of plighted word than this inconsistent pupil of the profound Florentine. And Randal's probity being now clear to him, he repeated, with stately formalities, his previous offer of Violante's hand.

"But," still falteringly sighed the provident and far-calculating Randal—"but your only child, your sole heiress! Oh, might not your consent to such a marriage (if known before your recall) jeopardize your cause? Your lands, your principalities, to devolve on the child of an humble Englishman! I dare not believe it. Ah, would Violante were not your heiress!"

"A noble wish," said Riccabocca, smiling blandly, "and one that the Fates will realize. Cheer up; Violante will not be my heiress."

"Ah," cried Randal, drawing a long breath—"ah, what do I hear?"

"Hist! I shall soon a second time be a father. And, to judge by the unerring researches of writers upon that most interesting of all subjects, parturitive science, I shall be the father of a son. He will, of course, succeed to the titles of Serrano. And Violante—"

"Will have nothing, I suppose?" exclaimed Randal, trying his best to look overjoyed till he had got his paws out of the trap into which he had so incautiously thrust them.

"Nay, her portion by our laws—to say nothing of my affection—would far exceed the ordinary dower which the

daughters of London merchants bring to the sons of British peers. Whoever marries Violante, provided I regain my estates, must submit to the cares which the poets assure us ever attend on wealth."

"Oh!" groaned Randal, as if already bowed beneath the cares, and sympathizing with the poets.

"And now, let me present you to your betrothed."

Although poor Randal had been remorselessly hurried along what Schiller calls the "gamut of feeling," during the last three minutes, down to the deep chord of despair at the abrupt intelligence that his betrothed was no heiress after all; thence ascending to vibrations of pleasant doubt as to the unborn usurper of her rights, according to the prophecies of parturitive science; and lastly, swelling into a concord of all sweet thoughts at the assurance that, come what might, she would be a wealthier bride than a peer's son could discover in the matrimonial Potosi of Lombard Street, — still the tormented lover was not there allowed to repose his exhausted though ravished soul. For, at the idea of personally confronting the destined bride — whose very existence had almost vanished from his mind's eye, amidst the golden showers that it saw falling divinely round her — Randal was suddenly reminded of the exceeding bluntness with which, at their last interview, it had been his policy to announce his suit, and of the necessity of an impromptu *false* suited to the new variations that tossed him again to and fro on the merciless gamut. However, he could not recoil from her father's proposition, though, in order to prepare Riccabocca for Violante's representation, he confessed pathetically that his impatience to obtain her consent and baffle Peschiera had made him appear a rude and presumptuous wooer. The philosopher, who was disposed to believe one kind of courtship to be much the same as another, in cases where the result of all courtships was once predetermined, smiled benignly, patted Randal's thin cheek, with a "Pooh, pooh, pazzie!" and left the room to summon Violante.

"If knowledge be power," soliloquized Randal, "ability is certainly good luck, as Miss Edgeworth shows in that story

of Murad the Unlucky, which I read at Eton; very clever story it is, too. So nothing comes amiss to *me*. Violante's escape, which has cost me the count's £10,000, proves to be worth to me, I dare say, ten times as much. No doubt she'll have a hundred thousand pounds at the least. And then, if her father have no other child, after all, or the child he expects die in infancy, why, once reconciled to his Government and restored to his estates, the law must take its usual course, and Violante will be the greatest heiress in Europe. As to the young lady herself, I confess she rather awes me; I know I shall be henpecked. Well, all respectable husbands are. There is something scampish and ruffianly in not being henpecked." Here Randal's smile might have harmonized well with Pluto's "iron tears;" but, iron as the smile was, the serious young man was ashamed of it. "What am I about," said he, half aloud, "chuckling to myself and wasting time, when I ought to be thinking gravely how to explain away my former cavalier courtship? Such a masterpiece as I thought it then! But who could foresee the turn things would take? Let me think; let me think. Plague on it, here she comes."

But Randal had not the fine ear of your more romantic lover; and, to his great relief, the exile entered the room unaccompanied by Violante. Riccabocca looked somewhat embarrassed.

"My dear Leslie, you must excuse my daughter to-day; she is still suffering from the agitation she has gone through, and cannot see you."

The lover tried not to look too delighted.

"Cruel!" said he; "yet I would not for worlds force myself on her presence. I hope, Duke, that she will not find it too difficult to obey the commands which dispose of her hand, and intrust her happiness to my grateful charge."

"To be plain with you, Randal, she does at present seem to find it more difficult than I foresaw. She even talks of—"

"Another attachment—Oh, heavens!"

"Attachment, *pazzie*! Whom has she seen? No, a convent! But leave it to me. In a calmer hour she will com-

prehend that a child must know no lot more enviable and holy than that of redeeming a father's honour. And now, if you are returning to London, may I ask you to convey to young Mr. Hazeldean my assurances of undying gratitude for his share in my daughter's delivery from that poor baffled swindler."

It is noticeable that, now Peschiera was no longer an object of dread to the nervous father, he became but an object of pity to the philosopher, and of contempt to the grandee.

"True," said Randal, "you told me Frank had a share in Lord L'Estrange's very clever and dramatic device. My Lord must be by nature a fine actor, — comic, with a touch of melodrama! Poor Frank! apparently he has lost the woman he adored, — Beatrice di Negra. You say she has accompanied the count. Is the marriage that was to be between her and Frank broken off?"

"I did not know such a marriage was contemplated. I understood her to be attached to another. Not that that is any reason why she would not have married Mr. Hazeldean. Express to him my congratulations on his escape."

"Nay, he must not know that I have inadvertently betrayed his confidence; but you now guess, what perhaps puzzled you before, — namely, how I came to be so well acquainted with the count and his movements. I was so intimate with my relation Frank, and Frank was affianced to the marchesa."

"I am glad you give me that explanation; it suffices. After all, the marchesa is not by nature a bad woman, — that is, not worse than women generally are, so Harley says, and Violante forgives and excuses her."

"Generous Violante! But it is true. So much did the marchesa appear to me possessed of fine, though ill-regulated qualities, that I always considered her disposed to aid in frustrating her brother's criminal designs. So I even said, if I remember right, to Violante."

Dropping this prudent and precautionary sentence, in order to guard against anything Violante might say as to that subtle mention of Beatrice which had predisposed her to confide in

the marchesa, Randal then hurried on, "But you want repose. I leave you the happiest, the most grateful of men. I will give your courteous message to Frank."

CHAPTER XII.

CURIOUS to learn what had passed between Beatrice and Frank, and deeply interested in all that could oust Frank out of the squire's goodwill, or aught that could injure his own prospects by tending to unite son and father, Randal was not slow in reaching his young kinsman's lodgings. It might be supposed that having, in all probability, just secured so great a fortune as would accompany Violante's hand, Randal might be indifferent to the success of his scheme on the Hazeldean exchequer. Such a supposition would grievously wrong this profound young man. For, in the first place, Violante was not yet won, nor her father yet restored to the estates which would defray her dower; and, in the next place, Randal, like Iago, loved villany for the genius it called forth in him. The sole luxury the abstemious aspirer allowed to himself was that which is found in intellectual restlessness. Untempted by wine, dead to love, unamused by pleasure, indifferent to the arts, despising literature save as means to some end of power, Randal Leslie was the incarnation of thought hatched out of the corruption of will. At twilight we see thin airy spectral insects, all wing and nippers, hovering, as if they could never pause, over some sullen mephitic pool. Just so, methinks, hover over Acheron such gnat-like, noiseless soarers into gloomy air out of Stygian deeps, as are the thoughts of spirits like Randal Leslie's. Wings have they, but only the better to pounce down,—draw their nutriment from unguarded material cuticles; and just when, maddened, you strike, and exulting exclaim, "Caught, by Jove!" wh—irr flies the diaphanous, ghostly larva, and your blow falls on your own twice-offended cheek.

The young men who were acquainted with Randal said he had not a vice! The fact being that his whole composition was one epic vice, so elaborately constructed that it had not an episode which a critic could call irrelevant. Grand young man!

"But, my dear fellow," said Randal, as soon as he had learned from Frank all that had passed on board the vessel between him and Beatrice, "I cannot believe this. 'Never loved you'? What was her object, then, in deceiving not only you, but myself? I suspect her declaration was but some heroical refinement of generosity. After her brother's dejection and probable ruin, she might feel that she was no match for you. Then, too, the squire's displeasure! I see it all; just like her, — noble, unhappy woman!"

Frank shook his head. "There are moments," said he, with a wisdom that comes out of those instincts which awake from the depths of youth's first great sorrow, — "moments when a woman cannot feign, and there are tones in the voice of a woman which men cannot misinterpret. She does not love me, — she never did love me; I can see that her heart has been elsewhere. No matter, — all is over. I don't deny that I am suffering an intense grief; it gnaws like a kind of sullen hunger; and I feel so broken, too, as if I had grown old, and there was nothing left worth living for. I don't deny all that."

"My poor, dear friend, if you would but believe —"

"I don't want to believe anything, except that I have been a great fool. I don't think I can ever commit such follies again. But I'm a man. I shall get the better of this; I should despise myself if I could not. And now let us talk of my dear father. Has he left town?"

"Left last night by the mail. You can write and tell him you have given up the marchesa, and all will be well again between you."

"Give her up! Fie, Randal! Do you think I should tell such a lie? She gave me up; I can claim no merit out of that."

"Oh, yes! I can make the squire see all to your advantage

Oh, if it were only the marchesa! but, alas! that cursed post-obit! How could Levy betray you? Never trust to usurers again; they cannot resist the temptation of a speedy profit. They first buy the son, and then sell him to the father. And the squire has such strange notions on matters of this kind."

"He is right to have them. There, just read this letter from my mother. It came to me this morning. I could hang myself if I were a dog; but I'm a man, and so I must bear it."

Randal took Mrs. Hazeldean's letter from Frank's trembling hand. The poor mother had learned, though but imperfectly, Frank's misdeeds from some hurried lines which the squire had despatched to her; and she wrote as good, indulgent, but sensible, right-minded mothers alone can write. More lenient to an imprudent love than the squire, she touched with discreet tenderness on Frank's rash engagements with a foreigner, but severely on his own open defiance of his father's wishes. Her anger was, however, reserved for that unholy post-obit. Here the hearty genial wife's love overcame the mother's affection. To count, in cold blood, on that husband's death, and to wound his heart so keenly, just where its jealous, fatherly fondness made it most susceptible!

"O Frank, Frank!" wrote Mrs. Hazeldean, "were it not for this, were it only for your unfortunate attachment to the Italian lady, only for your debts, only for the errors of hasty, extravagant youth, I should be with you now, my arms round your neck, kissing you, chiding you back to your father's heart. But—but the thought that between you and his heart has been the sordid calculation of his death, — *that* is a wall between us. I cannot come near you. I should not like to look on your face, and think how my William's tears fell over it, when I placed you, new born, in his arms, and bade him welcome his heir. What! you a mere boy still, your father yet in the prime of life, and the heir cannot wait till nature leaves him fatherless. Frank, Frank! this is so unlike you. Can London have ruined already a disposition so honest and affectionate?—No; I cannot believe it. There must be some mistake. Clear it up, I implore you; or, though as a mother I pity you, as a wife I cannot forgive."

Even Randal was affected by the letter; for, as we know, even Randal felt in his own person the strength of family ties. The poor squire's choler and bluffness had disguised the parental heart from an eye that, however acute, had not been willing to search for it; and Randal, ever affected through his intellect, had despised the very weakness on which he had preyed. But the mother's letter, so just and sensible (allowing that the squire's opinions had naturally influenced the wife to take what men of the world would call a very exaggerated view of the every-day occurrence of loans raised by a son, payable only at a father's death), — this letter, I say, if exaggerated according to fashionable notions, so sensible if judged by natural affections, touched the dull heart of the schemer, because approved by the quick tact of his intelligence.

"Frank," said he, with a sincerity that afterwards amazed himself, "go down at once to Hazeldean; see your mother, and explain to her how this transaction really happened. The woman you loved, and wooed as wife, in danger of an arrest, your distraction of mind, Levy's counsels, your hope to pay off the debt, so incurred to the usurer, from the fortune you would shortly receive with the marchesa. Speak to your mother, — she is a woman; women have a common interest in forgiving all faults that arise from the source of their power over us men, — I mean love. Go!"

"No, I cannot go; you see she would not like to look on my face. And I cannot repeat what you say so glibly. Besides, somehow or other, as I am so dependent upon my father, — and he has said as much, — I feel as if it would be mean in me to make any excuses. I did the thing, and must suffer for it. But I'm a m—an—no — I'm not a man here." Frank burst into tears.

At the sight of those tears, Randal gradually recovered from his strange aberration into vulgar and low humanity. His habitual contempt for his kinsman returned; and with contempt came the natural indifference to the sufferings of the thing to be put to use. It is contempt for the worm that makes the angler fix it on the hook, and observe with com-

placency that the vivacity of its wriggles will attract the bite. If the worm could but make the angler respect, or even fear it, the barb would find some other bait. Few anglers would impale an estimable silkworm, and still fewer the anglers who would finger into service a formidable hornet.

"Pooh, my dear Frank," said Randal; "I have given you my advice; you reject it. Well, what then will you do?"

"I shall ask for leave of absence, and run away somewhere," said Frank, drying his tears. "I can't face London; I can't mix with others. I want to be by myself, and wrestle with all that I feel *here*—in my heart. Then I shall write to my mother, say the plain truth, and leave her to judge as kindly of me as she can."

"You are quite right. Yes, leave town! Why not go abroad? You have never been abroad. New scenes will distract your mind. Run over to Paris."

"Not to Paris—I don't want gayeties; but I did intend to go abroad somewhere,—any dull dismal hole of a place. Good-by! Don't think of me any more for the present."

"But let me know where you go; and meanwhile I will see the squire."

"Say as little of me as you can to him. I know you mean most kindly, but oh, how I wish there never had been any third person between me and my father! There: you may well snatch away your hand. What an ungrateful wretch to you I am. I do believe I am the wickedest fellow. What! you shake hands with me still! My dear Randal, you have the best heart—God bless you!" Frank turned away, and disappeared within his dressing-room.

"They must be reconciled now, sooner or later,—squire and son," said Randal to himself, as he left the lodgings. "I don't see how I can prevent that,—the marchesa being withdrawn,—unless Frank does it for me. But it is well he should be abroad,—something may be made out of that; meanwhile I may yet do all that I could reasonably hope to do,—even if Frank had married Beatrice,—since he was not to be disinherited. Get the squire to advance the money for the Thornhill purchase, complete the affair; this marriage

with Violante will help; Levy must know that; secure the borough; — well thought of. I will go to Avenel's. By-the-by, by-the-by, the squire might as well keep me still in the entail after Frank, supposing Frank die childless. This love affair may keep him long from marrying. His hand was very hot, — a hectic colour; those strong-looking fellows often go off in rapid decline, especially if anything preys on their minds, — their minds are so very small.

“Ah, the Hazeldean parson, — and with Avenel! That young man, too, who is he? I have seen him before somewhere. — My dear Mr. Dale, this is a pleasant surprise. I thought you had returned to Hazeldean with our friend the squire?”

MR. DALE. — “The squire! Has he left town, and without telling me?”

RANDAL (taking aside the parson). — “He was anxious to get back to Mrs. Hazeldean, who was naturally very uneasy about her son and this foolish marriage; but I am happy to tell you that that marriage is effectually and permanently broken off.”

MR. DALE. — “How, how? My poor friend told me he had wholly failed to make any impression on Frank, — forbade me to mention the subject. I was just going to see Frank myself. I always had some influence with him. But, Mr. Leslie, explain this very sudden and happy event. The marriage broken off!”

RANDAL. — “It is a long story, and I dare not tell you my humble share in it. Nay, I must keep that secret. Frank might not forgive me. Suffice it that you have my word that the fair Italian has left England, and decidedly refused Frank's addresses. But stay, take my advice, don't go to him; you see it was not only the marriage that has offended the squire, but some pecuniary transactions, — an unfortunate post-obit bond on the Casino property. Frank ought to be left to his own repentant reflections. They will be most salutary; you know his temper, — he don't bear reproof; and yet it is better, on the other hand, not to let him treat too lightly what has passed. Let us leave him to himself for a few days. He is in an excellent frame of mind.”

MR. DALE (shaking Randal's hand warmly). — "You speak admirably — a post-obit! — so often as he has heard his father's opinion on such transactions. No, I will not see him; I should be too angry —"

RANDAL (leading the parson back, resumes, after an exchange of salutations with Avenel, who, meanwhile, had been conferring with his nephew). — "You should not be so long away from your rectory, Mr. Dale. What will your parish do without you?"

MR. DALE. — "The old fable of the wheel and the fly. I am afraid the wheel rolls on the same. But if I am absent from my parish, I am still in the company of one who does me honour as an old parishioner. You remember Leonard Fairfield, your antagonist in the Battle of the Stocks?"

MR. AVENEL. — "My nephew, I am proud to say, sir."

Randal bowed with marked civility, Leonard with a reserve no less marked.

MR. AVENEL (ascribing his nephew's reserve to shyness). — "You should be friends, you two youngsters. Who knows but you may run together in the same harness? Ah, that reminds me, Leslie, I have a word or two to say to you. Your servant, Mr. Dale. Shall be happy to present you to Mrs. Avenel. My card, — Eaton Square, Number ——. You will call on me to-morrow, Leonard. And mind, I shall be very angry if you persist in your refusal. Such an opening!" Avenel took Randal's arm, while the parson and Leonard walked on.

"Any fresh hints as to Lansmere?" asked Randal.

"Yes; I have now decided on the plan of contest. You must fight two and two, — you and Egerton against me and (if I can get him to stand, as I hope) my nephew, Leonard."

"What!" said Randal, alarmed; "then, after all, I can hope for no support from you?"

"I don't say that; but I have reason to think Lord L'Estrange will bestir himself actively in favour of Egerton. If so, it will be a very sharp contest; and I must manage the whole election on our side, and unite all our shaky votes, which I can best do by standing myself in the first instance,

reserving it to after consideration whether I shall throw up at the last; for I don't particularly want to come in, as I did a little time ago, before I had found out my nephew. Wonderful young man! with such a head, — will do me credit in the rotten old House; and I think I had best leave London, go to Screwstown, and look to my business. No, if Leonard stand, I must first see to get him in; and next, to keep Egerton out. It will probably, therefore, end in the return of one and one on either side, as we thought of before, — Leonard on our side; and Egerton sha'n't be the man on the other. You understand?"

"I do, my dear Avenel. Of course, as I before said, I can't dictate to your party whom they should prefer, — Egerton or myself. And it will be obvious to the public that your party would rather defeat so eminent an adversary as Mr. Egerton than a tyro in politics like me. Of course I cannot scheme for such a result; it would be misconstrued, and damage my character. But I rely equally on your friendly promise."

"Promise! No, I don't promise. I must first see how the cat jumps; and I don't know yet how our friends may like you, nor how they can be managed. All I can say is, that Audley Egerton sha'n't be M.P. for Lansmere. Meanwhile, you will take care not to commit yourself in speaking so that our party can't vote for you consistently; they must count on having you — when you get into the House."

"I am not a violent party-man at present," answered Randal, prudently. "And if public opinion prove on your side, it is the duty of a statesman to go with the times."

"Very sensibly said; and I have a private bill or two, and some other little jobs, I want to get through the House, which we can discuss later, should it come to a frank understanding between us. We must arrange how to meet privately at Lansmere, if necessary. I'll see to that. I shall go down this week. I think of taking a hint from the free and glorious land of America, and establishing secret caucuses. Nothing like 'em."

"Caucuses?"

"Small sub-committees that spy on their men night and day, and don't suffer them to be intimidated to vote the other way."

"You have an extraordinary head for public affairs, Avenel. You *should* come into parliament yourself; your nephew is so very young."

"So are you."

"Yes; but I know the world. Does he?"

"The world knows him, though not by name, and he has been the making of me."

"How? You surprise me."

Avenel first explained about the patent which Leonard had secured to him; and next confided, upon honour, Leonard's identity with the anonymous author whom the parson had supposed to be Professor Moss.

Randal Leslie felt a jealous pang. What! then — had this village boy, this associate of John Burley (literary vagabond, whom he supposed had long since gone to the dogs, and been buried at the expense of the parish) — had this boy so triumphed over birth, rearing, circumstance, that, if Randal and Leonard had met together in any public place, and Leonard's identity with the rising author had been revealed, every eye would have turned from Randal to gaze on Leonard? The common consent of mankind would have acknowledged the supreme royalty of genius when it once leaves its solitude, and strides into the world. What! was this rude villager the child of Fame, who, without an effort, and unconsciously, had inspired in the wearied heart of Beatrice di Negra a love that Randal knew, by an instinct, no arts, no craft, could ever create for him in the heart of woman? And now, did this same youth stand on the same level in the ascent to power as he, the well-born Randal Leslie, the accomplished *protégé* of the superb Audley Egerton? Were they to be rivals in the same arena of practical busy life? Randal gnawed his quivering lip.

All the while, however, the young man whom he so envied was a prey to sorrows deeper far than could ever find room or footing in the narrow and stony heart of the unloving schemer.

As Leonard walked through the crowded streets with the friend and monitor of his childhood, confiding the simple tale of his earlier trials, — when, amidst the wreck of fortune and in despair of fame, the Child-angel smiled by his side, like Hope, — all renown seemed to him so barren, all the future so dark! His voice trembled, and his countenance became so sad, that his benignant listener, divining that around the image of Helen there clung some passionate grief that overshadowed all worldly success, drew Leonard gently and gently on, till the young man, long yearning for some confidant, told him all, — how, faithful through long years to one pure and ardent memory, Helen had been seen once more, the child ripened to woman, and the memory revealing itself as love.

The parson listened with a mild and thoughtful brow, which expanded into a more cheerful expression as Leonard closed his story.

“I see no reason to despond,” said Mr. Dale. “You fear that Miss Digby does not return your attachment; you dwell upon her reserve, her distant, though kindly manner. Cheer up! All young ladies are under the influence of what phrenologists call the organ of Secretiveness, when they are in the society of the object of their preference. Just as you describe Miss Digby’s manner to you, was my Carry’s manner to myself.”

The parson here indulged in a very appropriate digression upon female modesty, which he wound up by asserting that that estimable virtue became more and more influenced by the secretive organ, in proportion as the favoured suitor approached near and nearer to a definite proposal. It was the duty of a gallant and honourable lover to make that proposal in distinct and orthodox form, before it could be expected that a young lady should commit herself and the dignity of her sex by the slightest hint as to her own inclinations.

“Next,” continued the parson, “you choose to torment yourself by contrasting your own origin and fortunes with the altered circumstances of Miss Digby, — the ward of Lord L’Estrange, the guest of Lady Lansmere. You say that if Lord L’Estrange could have countenanced such a union, he

would have adopted a different tone with you, — sounded your heart, encouraged your hopes, and so forth. I view things differently. I have reason to do so; and from all you have told me of this nobleman's interest in your fate, I venture to make you this promise, that if Miss Digby would accept your hand, Lord L'Estrange shall ratify her choice."

"My dear Mr. Dale," cried Leonard, transported, "you make me that promise?"

"I do, — from what you have said, and from what I myself know of Lord L'Estrange. Go, then, at once to Knightsbridge, see Miss Digby, show her your heart, explain to her, if you will, your prospects, ask her permission to apply to Lord L'Estrange (since he has constituted himself her guardian); and if Lord L'Estrange hesitate, — which, if your happiness be set on this union, I think he will not, — let me know, and leave the rest to me."

Leonard yielded himself to the parson's persuasive eloquence. Indeed, when he recalled to mind those passages in the manuscripts of the ill-fated Nora, which referred to the love that Harley had once borne to her, — for he felt convinced that Harley and the boy suitor of Nora's narrative were one and the same; and when all the interest that Harley had taken in his own fortunes was explained by his relationship to her (even when Lord L'Estrange had supposed it less close than he would now discover it to be), the young man, reasoning by his own heart, could not but suppose that the noble Harley would rejoice to confer happiness upon the son of her, so beloved by his boyhood.

"And to thee, perhaps, O my mother!" thought Leonard, with swimming eyes — "to thee, perhaps, even in thy grave, I shall owe the partner of my life, as to the mystic breath of thy genius I owe the first pure aspirations of my soul."

It will be seen that Leonard had not confided to the parson his discovery of Nora's manuscripts, nor even his knowledge of his real birth; for the proud son naturally shrank from any confidence that implicated Nora's fair name, until at least Harley, who, it was clear from those papers, must have intimately known his father, should perhaps decide the question

which the papers themselves left so terribly vague, — namely, whether he were the offspring of a legal marriage, or Nora had been the victim of some unholy fraud.

While the parson still talked, and while Leonard still mused and listened, their steps almost mechanically took the direction towards Knightsbridge, and paused at the gates of Lord Lansmere's house.

"Go in, my young friend; I will wait without to know the issue," said the parson, cheeringly. "Go: and with gratitude to Heaven, learn how to bear the most precious joy that can befall mortal man; or how to submit to youth's sharpest sorrow, with the humble belief that even sorrow is but some mercy concealed."

CHAPTER XIII.

LEONARD was shown into the drawing-room, and it so chanced that Helen was there alone. The girl's soft face was sadly changed, even since Leonard had seen it last; for the grief of natures mild and undemonstrative as hers, gnaws with quick ravages; but at Leonard's unexpected entrance, the colour rushed so vividly to the pale cheeks that its hectic might be taken for the lustre of bloom and health. She rose hurriedly, and in great confusion faltered out, "that she believed Lady Lansmere was in her room, — she would go for her," and moved towards the door, without seeming to notice the hand tremulously held forth to her; when Leonard exclaimed in uncontrollable emotions which pierced to her very heart, in the keen accent of reproach, —

"Oh, Miss Digby — oh, Helen — is it thus that you greet me, — rather thus that you shun me? Could I have foreseen this when we two orphans stood by the mournful bridge, — so friendless, so desolate, and so clinging each to each? Happy time!" He seized her hand suddenly as he spoke the last words, and bowed his face over it.

"I must not hear you. Do not talk so, Leonard, you break my heart. Let me go, let me go!"

"Is it that I am grown hateful to you; is it merely that you see my love and would discourage it? Helen, speak to me, — speak!"

He drew her with tender force towards him; and, holding her firmly by both hands, sought to gaze upon the face that she turned from him, — turned in such despair.

"You do not know," she said at last, struggling for composure, — "you do not know the new claims on me, my altered position, how I am bound, or you would be the last to speak thus to me, the first to give me courage, and bid me — bid me —"

"Bid you what?"

"Feel nothing here but duty!" cried Helen, drawing from his clasp both her hands, and placing them firmly on her breast.

"Miss Digby," said Leonard, after a short pause of bitter reflection, in which he wronged, while he thought to divine, her meaning, "you speak of new claims on you, your altered position — I comprehend. You may retain some tender remembrance of the past; but your duty now is to rebuke my presumption. It is as I thought and feared. This vain reputation which I have made is but a hollow sound, — it gives me no rank, assures me no fortune. I have no right to look for the Helen of old in the Helen of to-day. Be it so — forget what I have said, and forgive me."

This reproach stung to the quick the heart to which it appealed. A flash brightened the meek, tearful eyes, almost like the flash of resentment; her lips writhed in torture, and she felt as if all other pain were light compared with the anguish that Leonard could impute to her motives which to her simple nature seemed so unworthy of her, and so galling to himself.

A word rushed as by inspiration to her lip, and that word calmed and soothed her.

"Brother!" she said touchingly, "brother!"

The word had a contrary effect on Leonard. Sweet as it

was, tender as the voice that spoke it, it imposed a boundary to affection, it came as a knell to hope. He recoiled, shook his head mournfully: "Too late to accept that tie, — too late even for friendship. Henceforth — for long years to come — henceforth, till this heart has ceased to beat at your name — to thrill at your presence, we two — are strangers."

"Strangers! Well — yes, it is right — it must be so; we must not meet. Oh, Leonard Fairfield, who was it that in those days that you recall to me, who was it that found you destitute and obscure; who, not degrading you by charity, placed you in your right career; opened to you, amidst the labyrinth in which you were well-nigh lost, the broad road to knowledge, independence, fame? Answer me, — answer! Was it not the same who reared, sheltered your sister orphan? If I could forget what I have owed to him, should I not remember what he has done for you? Can I hear of your distinction, and not remember it? Can I think how proud she may be who will one day lean on your arm, and bear the name you have already raised beyond all the titles of an hour, — can I think of this, and not remember our common friend, benefactor, guardian? Would you forgive me, if I failed to do so?"

"But," faltered Leonard, fear mingling with the conjectures these words called forth — "but is it that Lord L'Estrange would not consent to our union? Or of what do you speak? You bewilder me."

Helen felt for some moments as if it were impossible to reply; and the words at length were dragged forth as if from the depth of her very soul.

"He came to me, our noble friend. I never dreamed of it. He did not tell me that he loved me. He told me that he was unhappy, alone; that in me, and only in me, he could find a comforter, a soother — He, he! And I had just arrived in England, was under his mother's roof, had not then once more seen you; and — and — what could I answer? Strengthen me, strengthen me, you whom I look up to and revere. Yes, yes, you are right. We must see each other no more. I am betrothed to another, — to him! Strengthen me!"

All the inherent nobleness of the poet's nature rose at once at this appeal.

"Oh, Helen — sister — Miss Digby, forgive me. You need no strength from me; I borrow it from you. I comprehend you, I respect. Banish all thought of me. Repay our common benefactor. Be what he asks of you, — his comforter, his soother; be more, — his pride and his joy. Happiness will come to you, as it comes to those who confer happiness and forget self. God comfort you in the passing struggle; God bless you, in the long years to come. Sister, I accept the holy name now, and will claim it hereafter, when I too can think more of others than myself."

Helen had covered her face with her hands, sobbing; but with that soft, womanly constraint which presses woe back into the heart. A strange sense of utter solitude suddenly pervaded her whole being, and by that sense of solitude she knew that he was gone.



CHAPTER XIV.

IN another room in that same house sat, solitary as Helen, a stern, gloomy, brooding man, in whom they who had best known him from his childhood could scarcely have recognized a trace of the humane, benignant, trustful, but wayward and varying Harley, Lord L'Estrange.

He had read that fragment of a memoir, in which, out of all the chasms of his barren and melancholy past, there rose two malignant truths that seemed literally to glare upon him with mocking and demon eyes. The woman whose remembrance had darkened all the sunshine of his life had loved another; the friend in whom he had confided his whole affectionate loyal soul had been his perfidious rival. He had read from the first word to the last, as if under a spell that held him breathless; and when he closed the manuscript, it was without a groan or sigh; but over his pale lips there

passed that withering smile, which is as sure an index of a heart overcharged with dire and fearful passions, as the arrowy flash of the lightning is of the tempests that are gathered within the cloud.

He then thrust the papers into his bosom, and, keeping his hand over them, firmly clenched, he left the room, and walked slowly on towards his father's house. With every step by the way, his nature, in the war of its elements, seemed to change and harden into forms of granite. Love, humanity, trust, vanished away. Hate, revenge, misanthropy, suspicion, and scorn of all that could wear the eyes of affection, or speak with the voice of honour, came fast through the gloom of his thoughts, settling down in the wilderness, grim and menacing as the harpies of ancient song —

*"Uncæque manus, et pallida semper Ora."*¹

Thus the gloomy man had crossed the threshold of his father's house, and silently entered the apartments still set apart for him. He had arrived about an hour before Leonard; and as he stood by the hearth, with his arms folded on his breast, and his eyes fixed lead-like on the ground, his mother came in to welcome and embrace him. He checked her eager inquiries after Violante, he recoiled from the touch of her hand.

"Hold, madam," said he, startling her ear with the cold austerity of his tone. "I cannot heed your questions, — I am filled with the question I must put to yourself. You opposed my boyish love for Leonora Avenel. I do not blame you, — all mothers of equal rank would have done the same. Yet, had you not frustrated all frank intercourse with her, I might have taken refusal from her own lips, — survived that grief, and now been a happy man. Years since then have rolled away, — rolled over her quiet slumbers, and my restless waking life. All this time were you aware that Audley Egerton had been the lover of Leonora Avenel?"

"Harley, Harley! do not speak to me in that cruel voice, do not look at me with those hard eyes!"

¹ "Hands armed with fangs, and lips forever pale."

"You knew it, then,—you, my mother!" continued Harley, unmoved by her rebuke; "and why did you never say, 'Son, you are wasting the bloom and uses of your life in sorrowful fidelity to a lie! You are lavishing trust and friendship on a perfidious hypocrite'?"

"How could I speak to you thus; how could I dare to do so, seeing you still so cherished the memory of that unhappy girl, still believed that she had returned your affection? Had I said to you what I knew (but not till after her death), as to her relations with Audley Egerton —"

"Well? You falter; go on; had you done so?"

"Would you have felt no desire for revenge? Might there not have been strife between you, danger, bloodshed? Harley, Harley! Is not such silence pardonable in a mother? And why deprive you too of the only friend you seemed to prize; who alone had some influence over you; who concurred with me in the prayer and hope, that some day you would find a living partner worthy to replace this lost delusion, arouse your faculties,—be the ornament your youth promised to your country? For you wrong Audley,—indeed you do!"

"Wrong him! Ah, let me not do that. Proceed."

"I do not excuse him his rivalry, nor his first concealment of it. But believe me, since then, his genuine remorse, his anxious tenderness for your welfare, his dread of losing your friendship —"

"Stop! It was doubtless Audley Egerton who induced you yourself to conceal what you call his 'relations' with her whom I can now so calmly name, — Leonora Avenel?"

"It was so, in truth; and from motives that —"

"Enough! let me hear no more."

"But you will not think too sternly of what is past? You are about to form new ties. You cannot be wild and wicked enough to meditate what your brow seems to threaten. You cannot dream of revenge,—risk Audley's life or your own?"

"Tut, tut, tut! What cause here for duels? Single combats are out of date; civilized men do not slay each other with sword and pistol. Tut! revenge! Does it look like revenge, that one object which brings me hither is to request my

father's permission to charge myself with the care of Audley Egerton's election? What he values most in the world is his political position; and here his political existence is at stake. You know that I have had through life the character of a weak, easy, somewhat over-generous man. Such men are not revengeful. Hold! You lay your hand on my arm, — I know the magic of that light touch, Mother; but its power over me is gone. Countess of Lansmere, hear me! Ever from infancy (save in that frantic passion for which I now despise myself), I have obeyed you, I trust, as a dutious son. Now, our relative positions are somewhat altered. I have the right to exact — I will not say to command — the right which wrong and injury bestow upon all men. Madam, the injured man has prerogatives that rival those of kings. I now call upon you to question me no more; not again to breathe the name of Leonora Avenel, unless I invite the subject; and not to inform Audley Egerton by a hint, by a breath, that I have discovered — what shall I call it? — his 'pardonable deceit.' Promise me this, by your affection as mother, and on your faith as gentlewoman; or I declare solemnly, that never in life will you look upon my face again."

Haughty and imperious though the countess was, her spirit quailed before Harley's brow and voice.

"Is this my son, — this my gentle Harley?" she said falteringly. "Oh, put your arms round my neck; let me feel that I have not lost my child!"

Harley looked softened, but he did not obey the pathetic prayer; nevertheless, he held out his hand, and turning away his face, said, in a milder voice, "Have I your promise?"

"You have, you have; but on condition that there pass no words between you and Audley that can end but in the strife which —"

"Strife!" interrupted Harley. "I repeat that the idea of challenge and duel between me and my friend from our school days, and on a quarrel that we could explain to no seconds, would be a burlesque upon all that is grave in the realities of life and feeling. I accept your promise and seal it thus —"

He pressed his lips to his mother's forehead, and passively received her embrace.

"Hush," he said, withdrawing from her arms, "I hear my father's voice."

Lord Lansmere threw open the door widely, and with a certain consciousness that a door by which an Earl of Lansmere entered ought to be thrown open widely. It could not have been opened with more majesty if a *huissier* or officer of the Household had stood on either side. The countess passed by her lord with a light step, and escaped.

"I was occupied with my architect in designs for the new infirmary, of which I shall make a present to our county. I have only just heard that you were here, Harley. What is all this about our fair Italian guest? Is she not coming back to us? Your mother refers me to you for explanations."

"You shall have them later, my dear father; at present I can think only of public affairs."

"Public affairs! they are indeed alarming. I am rejoiced to hear you express yourself so worthily. An awful crisis, Harley! And, gracious Heaven! I have heard that a low man, who was born in Lansmere, but made a fortune in America, is about to contest the borough. They tell me he is one of the Avenels, — a born Blue; is it possible?"

"I have come here on that business. As a peer you cannot, of course, interfere; but I propose, with your leave, to go down myself to Lansmere, and undertake the superintendence of the election. It would be better, perhaps, if you were not present; it would give us more liberty of action."

"My dear Harley, shake hands; anything you please. You know how I have wished to see you come forward, and take that part in life which becomes your birth."

"Ah, you think I have sadly wasted my existence hitherto."

"To be frank with you, yes, Harley," said the earl, with a pride that was noble in its nature, and not without dignity in its expression. "The more we take from our country, the more we owe to her. From the moment you came into the world as the inheritor of lands and honours, you were charged with a trust for the benefit of others, that it degrades one of our order of gentleman not to discharge."

Harley listened with a sombre brow, and made no direct reply.

"Indeed," resumed the earl, "I would rather you were about to canvass for yourself than for your friend Egerton. But I grant he is an example that it is never too late to follow. Why, who that had seen you both as youths, notwithstanding Audley had the advantage of being some years your senior—who could have thought that he was the one to become distinguished and eminent, and you to degenerate into the luxurious idler, averse to all trouble and careless of all fame? You, with such advantages, not only of higher fortunes, but, as every one said, of superior talents; you, who had then so much ambition, so keen a desire for glory, sleeping with Plutarch's Lives under your pillow, and only, my wild son, only too much energy. But you are a young man still; it is not too late to redeem the years you have thrown away."

"The years are nothing, — mere dates in an almanac; but the feelings, what can give me back those?—the hope, the enthusiasm, the — No matter! feelings do not help men to rise in the world. Egerton's feelings are not too lively. What I might have been, leave it to me to remember; let us talk of the example you set before me, — of Audley Egerton."

"We must get him in," said the earl, sinking his voice into a whisper. "It is of more importance to him than I even thought for. But you know his secrets. Why did you not confide to me frankly the state of his affairs?"

"His affairs? Do you mean that they are seriously embarrassed? This interests me much. Pray speak; what do you know?"

"He has discharged the greater part of his establishment. That in itself is natural on quitting office; but still it set people talking; and it has got wind that his estates are not only mortgaged for more than they are worth, but that he has been living upon the discount of bills; in short, he has been too intimate with a man whom we all know by sight, — a man who drives the finest horses in London, and they tell me (but *that* I cannot believe) lives in the familiar society of

the young puppies he snares to perdition. What's the man's name? Levy, is it not? — yes, Levy."

"I have seen Levy with him," said Harley; and a sinister joy lighted up his falcon eyes. "Levy — Levy — it is well."

"I hear but the gossip of the clubs," resumed the earl; "but they do say that Levy makes little disguise of his power over our very distinguished friend, and rather parades it as a merit with our party (and, indeed, with all men — for Egerton has personal friends in every party) that he keeps sundry bills locked up in his desk until Egerton is once more safe in parliament. Nevertheless if, after all, our friend were to lose his election, and Levy were then to seize on his effects, and proclaim his ruin, it would seriously damage, perhaps altogether destroy, Audley's political career."

"So I conclude," said Harley. "A Charles Fox might be a gamester, and a William Pitt be a pauper. But Audley Egerton is not of their giant stature; he stands so high because he stands upon heaps of respectable gold. Audley Egerton, needy and impoverished, out of parliament, and, as the vulgar slang has it, out at elbows, skulking from duns, perhaps in the Bench —"

"No, no; our party would never allow that; we would subscribe —"

"Worse than all, living as the pensioner of the party he aspired to lead! You say truly, his political prospects would be blasted. A man whose reputation lay in his outward respectability! Why, people would say that Audley Egerton has been — a solemn lie; eh, my father?"

"How can you talk with such coolness of your friend? You need say nothing to interest me in his election — if you mean that. Once in parliament, he must soon again be in office, — and learn to live on his salary. You must get him to submit to me the schedule of his liabilities. I have a head for business, as you know. I will arrange his affairs for him. And I will yet bet five to one, though I hate wagers, that he will be prime minister in three years. He is not brilliant, it is true; but just at this crisis we want a safe, moderate, judicious, conciliatory man; and Audley has so much tact, such

experience of the House, such knowledge of the world, and," added the earl, emphatically summing up his eulogies, "he is so thorough a gentleman!"

"A thorough gentleman, as you say, — the soul of honour! But, my dear father, it is your hour for riding; let me not detain you. It is settled, then; you do not come yourself to Lansmere. You put the house at my disposal, and allow me to invite Egerton, of course, and what other guests I may please; in short, you leave all to me?"

"Certainly; and if *you* cannot get in your friend, who can? That borough, it is an awkward, ungrateful place, and has been the plague of my life. So much as I have spent there, too, — so much as I have done to its trade!" And the earl, with an indignant sigh, left the room.

Harley seated himself deliberately at his writing-table, leaning his face on his hand, and looking abstractedly into space from under knit and lowering brows.

Harley L'Estrange was, as we have seen, a man singularly tenacious of affections and impressions. He was a man, too, whose nature was eminently bold, loyal, and candid; even the apparent whim and levity which misled the world, both as to his dispositions and his powers, might be half ascribed to that open temper which, in its over-contempt for all that seemed to savour of hypocrisy, sported with forms and ceremonials, and extracted humour, sometimes extravagant, sometimes profound, from "the solemn plausibilities of the world. The shock he had now received smote the very foundations of his mind, and, overthrowing all the airier structures which fancy and wit had built upon its surface, left it clear as a new world for the operations of the darker and more fearful passions. When a man of a heart so loving and a nature so irregularly powerful as Harley's suddenly and abruptly discovers deceit where he had most confided, it is not (as with the calmer pupils of that harsh teacher, Experience) the mere withdrawal of esteem and affection from the one offender; it is, that trust in everything seems gone; it is, that the injured spirit looks back to the Past, and condemns all its kindlier virtues as follies that conduced to its own woe; and looks

on to the Future as to a journey beset with smiling traitors, whom it must meet with an equal simulation, or crush with a superior force. The guilt of treason to men like these is incalculable, — it robs the world of all the benefits they would otherwise have lavished as they passed; it is responsible for all the ill that springs from the corruption of natures whose very luxuriance, when the atmosphere is once tainted, does but diffuse disease, — even as the malaria settles not over thin and barren soils, not over wastes that have been from all time desolate, but over the places in which southern suns had once ripened delightful gardens, or the sites of cities, in which the pomp of palaces has passed away.

It was not enough that the friend of his youth, the confidant of his love, had betrayed his trust, — been the secret and successful rival; not enough that the woman his boyhood had madly idolized, and all the while he had sought her traces with pining, remorseful heart — believing she but eluded his suit from the emulation of a kindred generosity, desiring rather to sacrifice her own love than to cost to his the sacrifice of all which youth rashly scorns and the world so highly estimates, — not enough that all this while her refuge had been the bosom of another. This was not enough of injury. His whole life had been wasted on a delusion; his faculties and aims, the wholesome ambition of lofty minds, had been arrested at the very onset of fair existence; his heart corroded by a regret for which there was no cause; his conscience charged with the terror that his wild chase had urged a too tender victim to the grave, over which he had mourned. What years that might otherwise have been to himself so serene, to the world so useful, had been consumed in objectless, barren, melancholy dreams! And all this while to whom had his complaints been uttered? — to the man who knew that his remorse was an idle spectre and his faithful sorrow a mocking self-deceit. Every thought that could gall man's natural pride, every remembrance that could sting into revenge a heart that had loved too deeply not to be accessible to hate, conspired to goad those maddening Furies who come into every temple which is once desecrated by the presence

of the evil passions. In that sullen silence of the soul, vengeance took the form of justice. Changed though his feelings towards Leonora Avenel were, the story of her grief and her wrongs embittered still more his wrath against his rival. The fragments of her memoir left naturally on Harley's mind the conviction that she had been the victim of an infamous fraud, the dupe of a false marriage. His idol had not only been stolen from the altar, — it had been sullied by the sacrifice; broken with remorseless hand, and thrust into dishonoured clay; mutilated, defamed; its very memory a thing of contempt to him who had ravished it from worship. The living Harley and the dead Nora — both called aloud to their joint despoiler, "Restore what thou hast taken from us, or pay the forfeit!"

Thus, then, during the interview between Helen and Leonard, thus Harley L'Estrange sat alone! and as a rude irregular lump of steel, when wheeled round into rapid motion, assumes the form of the circle it describes, so his iron purpose, hurried on by his relentless passion, filled the space into which he gazed with optical delusions, scheme after scheme revolving and consummating the circles that clasped a foe.

CHAPTER XV.

THE entrance of a servant, announcing a name which Harley, in the absorption of his gloomy revery, did not hear, was followed by that of a person on whom he lifted his eyes in the cold and haughty surprise with which a man much occupied greets and rebukes the intrusion of an unwelcome stranger.

"It is so long since your Lordship has seen me," said the visitor, with mild dignity, "that I cannot wonder you do not recognize my person, and have forgotten my name."

"Sir," answered Harley, with an impatient rudeness, ill in harmony with the urbanity for which he was usually distin-

guished,—“sir, your person is strange to me, and your name I did not hear; but, at all events, I am not now at leisure to attend to you. Excuse my plainness.”

“Yet pardon me if I still linger. My name is Dale. I was formerly curate at Lansmere; and I would speak to your Lordship in the name and the memory of one once dear to you,—Leonora Avenel.”

HARLEY (after a short pause). — “Sir, I cannot conjecture your business. But be seated. I remember you now, though years have altered both, and I have since heard much in your favour from Leonard Fairfield. Still let me pray that you will be brief.”

MR. DALE. — “May I assume at once that you have divined the parentage of the young man you call Fairfield? When I listened to his grateful praises of your beneficence, and marked with melancholy pleasure the reverence in which he holds you, my heart swelled within me. I acknowledged the mysterious force of nature.”

HARLEY. — “Force of nature! You talk in riddles.”

MR. DALE (indignantly). — “Oh, my Lord, how can you so disguise your better self? Surely in Leonard Fairfield you have long since recognized the son of Nora Avenel?”

Harley passed his hand over his face. “Ah,” thought he, “she lived to bear a son then,—a son to Egerton! Leonard is that son. I should have known it by the likeness, by the fond foolish impulse that moved me to him. This is why he confided to me these fearful memoirs. He seeks his father,—he shall find him.”

MR. DALE (mistaking the cause of Harley’s silence). — “I honour your compunction, my Lord. Oh, let your heart and your conscience continue to speak to your worldly pride.”

HARLEY. — “My compunction, heart, conscience! Mr. Dale, you insult me!”

MR. DALE (sternly). — “Not so; I am fulfilling my mission, which bids me rebuke the sinner. Leonora Avenel speaks in me, and commands the guilty father to acknowledge the innocent child!”

Harley half rose, and his eyes literally flashed fire; but he

calmed his anger into irony. "Ha!" said he, with a sarcastic smile, "so you suppose that I was the perfidious seducer of Nora Avenel,—that I am the callous father of the child who came into the world without a name. Very well, sir, taking these assumptions for granted, what is it you demand from me on behalf of this young man?"

"I ask from you his happiness," replied Mr. Dale, imploringly; and yielding to the compassion with which Leonard inspired him, and persuaded that Lord L'Estrange felt a father's love for the boy whom he had saved from the whirlpool of London, and guided to safety and honourable independence, he here, with simple eloquence, narrated all Leonard's feelings for Helen,—his silent fidelity to her image, though a child's, his love when he again beheld her as a woman, the modest fears which the parson himself had combated, the recommendation that Mr. Dale had forced upon him, to confess his affection to Helen, and plead his cause. "Anxious, as you may believe, for his success," continued the parson, "I waited without your gates till he came from Miss Digby's presence. And oh, my Lord, had you but seen his face!—such emotion and such despair! I could not learn from him what had passed. He escaped from me and rushed away. All that I could gather was from a few broken words, and from those words I formed the conjecture (it may be erroneous) that the obstacle to his happiness was not in Helen's heart, my Lord, but seemed to me as if it were in yourself. Therefore, when he had vanished from my sight, I took courage, and came at once to you. If he be your son, and Helen Digby be your ward,—she herself an orphan, dependent on your bounty,—why should they be severed? Equals in years, united by early circumstance, congenial, it seems, in simple habits and refined tastes,—what should hinder their union, unless it be the want of fortune? And all men know your wealth, none ever questioned your generosity. My Lord, my Lord, your look freezes me. If I have offended, do not visit my offence on him,—on Leonard!"

"And so," said Harley, still controlling his rage, "so this boy—whom, as you say, I saved from that pitiless world

which has engulfed many a nobler genius — so, in return for all, he has sought to rob me of the last affection, poor and lukewarm though it was, that remained to me in life? He presume to lift his eyes to my affianced bride! He! And for aught I know, steal from me her living heart, and leave to me her icy hand!”

“Oh, my Lord, your affianced bride! I never dreamed of this. I implore your pardon. The very thought is so terrible, so unnatural! the son to woo the father’s! Oh, what sin have I fallen into! The sin was mine,—I urged and persuaded him to it. He was ignorant as myself. Forgive him, forgive him!”

“Mr. Dale,” said Harley, rising, and extending his hand, which the poor parson felt himself unworthy to take,—“Mr. Dale, you are a good man,—if, indeed, this universe of liars contains some man who does not cheat our judgment when we deem him honest. Allow me only to ask why you consider Leonard Fairfield to be my son.”

“Was not your youthful admiration for poor Nora evident to me? Remember I was a frequent guest at Lansmere Park; and it was so natural that you, with all your brilliant gifts, should captivate her refined fancy, her affectionate heart.”

“Natural — you think so,—go on.”

“Your mother, as became her, separated you. It was not unknown to me that you still cherished a passion which your rank forbade to be lawful. Poor girl! she left the roof of her protectress, Lady Jane. Nothing was known of her till she came to her father’s house to give birth to a child, and die. And the same day that dawned on her corpse, you hurried from the place. Ah, no doubt your conscience smote you; you have never returned to Lansmere since.”

Harley’s breast heaved, he waved his hand; the parson resumed,—

“Whom could I suspect but you? I made inquiries: they confirmed my suspicions.”

“Perhaps you inquired of my friend, Mr. Egerton? He was with me when — when — as you say, I hurried from the place.”

"I did, my Lord."

"And he?"

"Denied your guilt; but still, a man of honour so nice, of heart so feeling, could not feign readily. His denial did not deceive me."

"Honest man!" said Harley; and his hand gripped at the breast over which still rustled, as if with a ghostly sigh, the records of the dead. "He knew she had left a son, too?"

"He did, my Lord; of course, I told him that."

"The son whom I found starving in the streets of London! Mr. Dale, as you see, your words move me very much. I cannot deny that he who wronged, it may be with no common treachery, that young mother — for Nora Avenel was not one to be lightly seduced into error —"

"Indeed, no!"

"And who then thought no more of the offspring of her anguish and his own crime — I cannot deny that that man deserves some chastisement, — should render some atonement. Am I not right here? Answer with the plain speech which becomes your sacred calling."

"I cannot say otherwise, my Lord," replied the parson, pitying what appeared to him such remorse. "But if he repent —"

"Enough," interrupted Harley. "I now invite you to visit me at Lansmere; give me your address, and I will apprise you of the day on which I will request your presence. Leonard Fairfield shall find a father — I was about to say, worthy of himself. For the rest — stay; reseat yourself. For the rest" — and again the sinister smile broke from Harley's eye and lip — "I will not yet say whether I can, or ought to, resign to a younger and fairer suitor the lady who has accepted my own hand. I have no reason yet to believe that she prefers him. But what think you, meanwhile, of this proposal? Mr. Avenel wishes his nephew to contest the borough of Lansmere, has urged me to obtain the young man's consent. True, that he may thus endanger the seat of Mr. Audley Egerton. What then? Mr. Audley Egerton is a great man, and may find another seat; that should not stand in the way. Let

Leonard obey his uncle. If he win the election, why, he'll be a more equal match, in the world's eye, for Miss Digby,—that is, should she prefer him to myself; and if she do not, still, in public life, there is a cure for all private sorrow. That is a maxim of Mr. Audley Egerton's; and he, you know, is a man not only of the nicest honour, but the deepest worldly wisdom. Do you like my proposition?"

"It seems to me most considerate, most generous."

"Then you shall take to Leonard the lines I am about to write."

LORD L'ESTRANGE TO LEONARD FAIRFIELD.

I have read the memoir you intrusted to me. I will follow up all the clews that it gives me. Meanwhile I request you to suspend all questions; forbear all reference to a subject which, as you may well conjecture, is fraught with painful recollections to myself. At this moment, too, I am compelled to concentrate my thoughts upon affairs of a public nature, and yet which may sensibly affect yourself. There are reasons why I urge you to comply with your uncle's wish, and stand for the borough of Lansmere at the approaching election. If the exquisite gratitude of your nature so overrates what I may have done for you that you think you owe me some obligations, you will richly repay them on the day in which I hear you hailed as member for Lansmere. Relying on that generous principle of self-sacrifice, which actuates all your conduct, I shall count upon your surrendering your preference to private life, and entering the arena of that noble ambition which has conferred such dignity on the name of my friend Audley Egerton. He, it is true, will be your opponent; but he is too generous not to pardon my zeal for the interests of a youth whose career I am vain enough to think that I have aided. And as Mr. Randal Leslie stands in coalition with Egerton, and Mr. Avenel believes that two candidates of the same party cannot both succeed, the result may be to the satisfaction of all the feelings which I entertain for Audley Egerton, and for you, who, I have reason to think, will emulate his titles to my esteem.

Yours,

L'ESTRANGE.

"There, Mr. Dale," said Harley, sealing his letter, and giving it into the parson's hands,— "there, you shall deliver this note to your friend. But no; upon second thoughts, since he does not yet know of your visit to me, it is best that he should

be still in ignorance of it. For should Miss Digby resolve to abide by her present engagements, it were surely kind to save Leonard the pain of learning that you had communicated to me that rivalry he himself had concealed. Let all that has passed between us be kept in strict confidence."

"I will obey you, my Lord," answered the parson, meekly, startled to find that he who had come to arrogate authority was now submitting to commands; and all at fault what judgment he could venture to pass upon the man whom he had regarded as a criminal, who had not even denied the crime imputed to him, yet who now impressed the accusing priest with something of that respect which Mr. Dale had never before conceded but to Virtue. Could he have then but looked into the dark and stormy heart, which he *twice* misread!

"It is well,—very well," muttered Harley, when the door had closed upon the parson. "The viper and the viper's brood! So it was this man's son that I led from the dire Slough of Despond; and the son unconsciously imitates the father's gratitude and honour—Ha, ha!" Suddenly the bitter laugh was arrested; a flash of almost celestial joy darted through the warring elements of storm and darkness. If Helen returned Leonard's affection, Harley L'Estrange was free! And through that flash the face of Violante shone upon him as an angel's. But the heavenly light and the angel face vanished abruptly, swallowed up in the black abyss of the rent and tortured soul.

"Fool!" said the unhappy man, aloud, in his anguish—"fool! what then? Were I free, would it be to trust my fate again to falsehood? If, in all the bloom and glory of my youth, I failed to win the heart of a village girl; if, once more deluding myself, it is in vain that I have tended, reared, cherished, some germ of woman's human affection in the orphan I saved from penury,—how look for love in the brilliant princess, whom all the sleek Lotharios of our gaudy world will surround with their homage when once she alights on their sphere! If perfidy be my fate—what hell of hells, in the thought!—that a wife might lay her head in my bosom, and—oh, horror! horror! No! I would not accept

her hand were it offered, nor believe in her love were it pledged to me. Stern soul of mine, wise at last, love never more,— never more believe in truth!”

CHAPTER XVI.

As Harley quitted the room, Helen's pale sweet face looked forth from a door in the same corridor. She advanced towards him timidly.

“May I speak with you?” she said, in almost inaudible accents; “I have been listening for your footstep.”

Harley looked at her steadfastly. Then, without a word, he followed her into the room she had left, and closed the door.

“I, too,” said he, “meant to seek an interview with yourself—but later. You would speak to me, Helen,—say on. Ah, child, what mean you? Why this?”—for Helen was kneeling at his feet.

“Let me kneel,” she said, resisting the hand that sought to raise her. “Let me kneel till I have explained all, and perhaps won your pardon. You said something the other evening. It has weighed on my heart and my conscience ever since. You said ‘that I should have no secret from you; for *that*, in our relation to each other, would be deceit.’ I have had a secret; but oh, believe me! it was long ere it was clearly visible to myself. You honoured me with a suit so far beyond my birth, my merits. You said that I might console and comfort you. At those words, what answer could I give,—I, who owe you so much more than a daughter's duty? And I thought that my affections were free,—that they would obey that duty. But—but—but—” continued Helen, bowing her head still lowlier, and in a voice far fainter—“I deceived myself. I again saw *him* who had been all in the world to me, when the world was so terrible, and then—and

then — I trembled. I was terrified at my own memories, my own thoughts. Still I struggled to banish the past, resolutely, firmly. Oh, you believe me, do you not? And I hoped to conquer. Yet ever since those words of yours, I felt that I ought to tell you even of the struggle. This is the first time we have met since you spoke them. And now — now — I have seen him again, and — and — though not by a word could she you had deigned to woo as your bride encourage hope in another; though there — there where you now stand — he bade me farewell, and we parted as if forever, — yet — yet — O Lord L'Estrange! in return for your rank, wealth, your still nobler gifts of nature, what should I bring? — Something more than gratitude, esteem, reverence, — at least an undivided heart, filled with your image, and yours alone. And this I cannot give. Pardon me, — not for what I say now, but for not saying it before. Pardon me, O my benefactor, pardon me!”

“Rise, Helen,” said Harley, with relaxing brow, though still unwilling to yield to one softer and holier emotion. “Rise!” And he lifted her up, and drew her towards the light. “Let me look at your face. There seems no guile here. These tears are surely honest. If I cannot be loved, it is my fate, and not your crime. Now, listen to me. If you grant me nothing else, will you give me the obedience which the ward owes to the guardian, the child to the parent?”

“Yes, oh, yes!” murmured Helen.

“Then while I release you from all troth to me, I claim the right to refuse, if I so please it, my assent to the suit of — of the person you prefer. I acquit you of deceit, but I reserve to myself the judgment I shall pass on him. Until I myself sanction that suit, will you promise not to recall in any way the rejection which, if I understand you rightly, you have given to it?”

“I promise.”

“And if I say to you, ‘Helen, this man is not worthy of you —’ ”

“No, no! do not say that, — I could not believe you.”

Harley frowned, but resumed calmly, “If, then, I say, ‘Ask

me not wherefore, but I forbid you to be the wife of Leonard Fairfield,' what would be your answer?"

"Ah, my Lord, if you can but comfort him, do with me as you will! but do not command me to break his heart."

"Oh, silly child," cried Harley, laughing scornfully, "hearts are not found in the race from which that man sprang. But I take your promise, with its credulous condition. Helen, I pity you. I have been as weak as you, bearded man though I be. Some day or other, you and I may live to laugh at the follies at which you weep now. I can give you no other comfort, for I know of none."

He moved to the door, and paused at the threshold: "I shall not see you again for some days, Helen. Perhaps I may request my mother to join me at Lansmere; if so, I shall pray you to accompany her. For the present, let all believe that our position is unchanged. The time will soon come when I may —"

Helen looked up wistfully through her tears.

"I may release you from all duties to me," continued Harley, with grave and severe coldness; "or I may claim your promise in spite of the condition; for your lover's heart will not be broken. Adieu!"



CHAPTER XVII.

As Harley entered London, he came suddenly upon Randal Leslie, who was hurrying from Eaton Square, having not only accompanied Mr. Avenel in his walk, but gone home with him, and spent half the day in that gentleman's society. He was now on his way to the House of Commons, at which some disclosure as to the day for the dissolution of parliament was expected.

"Lord L'Estrange," said Randal, "I must stop you. I have been to Norwood, and seen our noble friend. He has confided to me, of course, all that passed. How can I express my

gratitude to you! By what rare talent, with what signal courage, you have saved the happiness — perhaps even the honour — of my plighted bride!”

“Your bride! The duke, then, still holds to the promise you were fortunate enough to obtain from Dr. Riccabocca?”

“He confirms that promise more solemnly than ever. You may well be surprised at his magnanimity.”

“No; he is a philosopher,— nothing in him can surprise me. But he seemed to think, when I saw him, that there were circumstances you might find it hard to explain.”

“Hard! Nothing so easy. Allow me to tender to you the same explanations which satisfied one whom philosophy itself has made as open to truth as he is clear-sighted to imposture.”

“Another time, Mr. Leslie. If your bride’s father be satisfied, what right have I to doubt? By the way, you stand for Lansmere. Do me the favour to fix your quarters at the Park during the election. You will, of course, accompany Mr. Egerton.”

“You are most kind,” answered Randal, greatly surprised.

“You accept? That is well. We shall then have ample opportunity for those explanations which you honour me by offering; and, to make your visit still more agreeable, I may perhaps induce our friends at Norwood to meet you. Good-day.”

Harley walked on, leaving Randal motionless in amaze, but tormented with suspicion. What could such courtesies in Lord L’Estrange portend? Surely no good.

“I am about to hold the balance of justice,” said Harley to himself. “I will cast the light-weight of that knave into the scale. Violante never can be mine; but I did not save her from a Peschiera to leave her to a Randal Leslie. Ha, ha! Audley Egerton has some human feeling,—tenderness for that youth whom he has selected from the world, in which he left Nora’s child to the jaws of Famine. Through that side I can reach at his heart, and prove him a fool like myself, where he esteemed and confided! Good.”

Thus soliloquizing, Lord L’Estrange gained the corner of Bruton Street, when he was again somewhat abruptly accosted.

"My dear Lord L'Estrange, let me shake you by the hand; for Heaven knows when I may see you again, and you have suffered me to assist in one good action."

"Frank Hazeldean, I am pleased indeed to meet you. Why do you indulge in that melancholy doubt as to the time when I may see you again?"

"I have just got leave of absence. I am not well, and I am rather hipped, so I shall go abroad for a few weeks."

In spite of himself, the sombre, brooding man felt interest and sympathy in the dejection that was evident in Frank's voice and countenance. "Another dupe to affection," thought he, as if in apology to himself,—"of course, a dupe; he is honest and artless—at present." He pressed kindly on the arm which he had involuntarily twined within his own. "I conceive how you now grieve, my young friend," said he; "but you will congratulate yourself hereafter on what this day seems to you an affliction."

"My dear Lord —"

"I am much older than you, but not old enough for such formal ceremony. Pray call me L'Estrange."

"Thank you; and I should indeed like to speak to you as a friend. There is a thought on my mind which haunts me. I dare say it is foolish enough, but I am sure *you* will not laugh at me. You heard what Madame di Negra said to me last night. I have been trifled with and misled, but I cannot forget so soon how dear to me that woman was. I am not going to bore you with such nonsense; but from what I can understand, her brother is likely to lose all his fortune; and, even if not, he is a sad scoundrel. I cannot bear the thought that she should be so dependent on him, that she may come to want. After all, there must be good in her,—good in her to refuse my hand if she did not love me. A mercenary woman so circumstanced would not have done that."

"You are quite right. But do not torment yourself with such generous fears. Madame di Negra shall not come to want, shall not be dependent on her infamous brother. The first act of the Duke of Serrano, on regaining his estates, will be a suitable provision for his kinswoman. I will answer for this."

"You take a load off my mind. I did mean to ask you to intercede with Riccabocca,—that is, the duke (it is so hard to think he can be a duke!)—I, alas! have nothing in my power to bestow upon Madame di Negra. I may, indeed, sell my commission; but then I have a debt which I long to pay off, and the sale of the commission would not suffice even for that; and perhaps my father might be still more angry if I do sell it. Well, good-by. I shall now go away happy,—that is, comparatively. One must bear things like—a man!"

"I should like, however, to see you again before you go abroad. I will call on you. Meanwhile, can you tell me the number of one Baron Levy? He lives in this street, I know."

"Levy! Oh, have no dealings with him, I advise, I entreat you! He is the most plausible, dangerous rascal; and, for Heaven's sake! pray be warned by me, and let nothing entangle you into—a POST-OBIT!"

"Be re-assured, I am more accustomed to lend money than borrow it; and as to a post-obit, I have a foolish prejudice against such transactions."

"Don't call it foolish, L'Estrange; I honour you for it. How I wish I had known you earlier—so few men of the world are like you. Even Randal Leslie, who is so faultless in most things, and never gets into a scrape himself, called my own scruples foolish. However—"

"Stay—Randal Leslie! What! He advised you to borrow on a post-obit, and probably shared the loan with you?"

"Oh, no; not a shilling."

"Tell me all about it, Frank. Perhaps, as I see that Levy is mixed up in the affair, your information may be useful to myself, and put me on my guard in dealing with that popular gentleman."

Frank, who somehow or other felt himself quite at home with Harley, and who, with all his respect for Randal Leslie's talents, had a vague notion that Lord L'Estrange was quite as clever, and, from his years and experience, likely to be a safer and more judicious counsellor, was noways loath to impart the confidence thus pressed for.

He told Harley of his debts, his first dealings with Levy, the unhappy post-obit into which he had been hurried by the distress of Madame di Negra; his father's anger, his mother's letter, his own feelings of mingled shame and pride, which made him fear that repentance would but seem self-interest, his desire to sell his commission, and let its sale redeem in part the post-obit; in short, he made what is called a clean breast of it. Randal Leslie was necessarily mixed up with this recital; and the subtle cross-questionings of Harley extracted far more as to that young diplomatist's agency in all these melancholy concerns than the ingenuous narrator himself was aware of.

"So then," said Harley, "Mr. Leslie assured you of Madame di Negra's affection, when you yourself doubted of it?"

"Yes; she took him in, even more than she did me."

"Simple Mr. Leslie! And the same kind friend? — who is related to you, did you say?"

"His grandmother was a Hazeldean."

"Humph. The same kind relation led you to believe that you could pay off this bond with the marchesa's portion, and that he could obtain the consent of your parents to your marriage with that lady?"

"I ought to have known better; my father's prejudices against foreigners and Papists are so strong."

"And now Mr. Leslie concurs with you, that it is best for you to go abroad, and trust to his intercession with your father. He has evidently, then, gained a great influence over Mr. Hazeldean."

"My father naturally compares me with him,— he so clever, so promising, so regular in his habits, and I such a reckless scapegrace."

"And the bulk of your father's property is unentailed; Mr. Hazeldean might disinherit you?"

"I deserve it. I hope he will."

"You have no brothers nor sisters,— no relation, perhaps, after your parents, nearer to you than your excellent friend Mr. Randal Leslie?"

"No; that is the reason he is so kind to me, otherwise I am the last person to suit him. You have no idea how well-informed and clever he is," added Fránk, in a tone between admiration and awe.

"My dear Hazeldean, you will take my advice, will you not?"

"Certainly. You are too good."

"Let all your family, Mr. Leslie included, suppose you to be gone abroad; but stay quietly in England, and within a day's journey of Lansmere Park. I am obliged to go thither for the approaching election. I may ask you to come over. I think I see a way to serve you; and if so, you will soon hear from me. Now, Baron Levy's number?"

"That is the house with the cabriolet at the door. How such a fellow can have such a horse!—'t is out of all keeping!"

"Not at all; horses are high-spirited, generous, unsuspicious animals. They never know if it is a rogue who drives them. I have your promise, then, and you will send me your address?"

"I will. Strange that I feel more confidence in you than I do even in Randal. Do take care of Levy."

Lord L'Estrange and Frank here shook hands, and Frank, with an anxious groan, saw L'Estrange disappear within the portals of the sleek destroyer.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LORD L'ESTRANGE followed the spruce servant into Baron Levy's luxurious study.

The baron looked greatly amazed at his unexpected visitor; but he got up, handed a chair to my Lord with a low bow. "This is an honour," said he.

"You have a charming abode here," said Lord L'Estrange, looking round. "Very fine bronzes,—excellent taste. Your

reception-rooms above are, doubtless, a model to all decorators?"

"Would your Lordship condescend to see them?" said Levy, wondering, but flattered.

"With the greatest pleasure."

"Lights!" cried Levy, to the servant who answered his bell. "Lights in the drawing-rooms,—it is growing dark."

Lord L'Estrange followed the usurer upstairs; admired everything,—pictures, draperies, Sèvres china, to the very shape of the downy *fauteuils*, to the very pattern of the Tournay carpets. Reclining then on one of the voluptuous sofas, Lord L'Estrange said smilingly, "You are a wise man: there is no advantage in being rich, unless one enjoys one's riches."

"My own maxim, Lord L'Estrange."

"And it is something, too, to have a taste for good society. Small pride would you have, my dear baron, in these rooms, luxurious though they are, if filled with guests of vulgar exterior and plebeian manners. It is only in the world in which *we* move that we find persons who harmonize, as it were, with the porcelain of Sèvres, and these sofas that might have come from Versailles."

"I own," said Levy, "that I have what some may call a weakness in a *parvenu* like myself. I have a love for the *beau monde*. It is indeed a pleasure to me when I receive men like your Lordship."

"But why call yourself a *parvenu*? Though you are contented to honour the name of Levy, we, in society, all know that you are the son of a long-descended English peer. Child of love, it is true; but the Graces smile on those over whose birth Venus presided. Pardon my old-fashioned mythological similes,—they go so well with these rooms—*Louis Quinze*."

"Since you have touched on my birth," said Levy, his colour rather heightening, not with shame, but with pride, "I don't deny that it has had some effect on my habits and tastes in life. In fact —"

"In fact, own that you would be a miserable man, in spite

of all your wealth, if the young dandies, who throng to your banquets, were to cut you dead in the streets; if, when your high-stepping horse stopped at your club, the porter shut the door in your face; if, when you lounged into the opera-pit, handsome dog that you are, each spendthrift rake in 'Fop's Alley,' who now waits but the scratch of your pen to endorse *billets doux* with the charm that can chain to himself for a month some nymph of the Ballet, spinning round in a whirlwind of *tulle*, would shrink from the touch of your condescending forefinger with more dread of its contact than a bailiff's tap in the thick of Pall Mall could inspire; if, reduced to the company of city clerks, parasite led-captains —"

"Oh, don't go on, my dear Lord," cried Levy, laughing affectedly. "Impossible though the picture be, it is really appalling. Cut me off from May Fair and St. James's, and I should go into my strong closet and hang myself."

"And yet, my dear baron, all this may happen if I have the whim just to try; all this *will* happen, unless, ere I leave your house, you concede the conditions I come here to impose."

"My Lord!" exclaimed Levy, starting up, and pulling down his waistcoat with nervous passionate fingers, "if you were not under my own roof, I would —"

"Truce with mock heroics. Sit down, sir, sit down. I will briefly state my threat, more briefly my conditions. You will be scarcely more prolix in your reply. Your fortune I cannot touch, your enjoyment of it I can destroy. Refuse my conditions, make me your enemy, — and war to the knife! I will interrogate all the young dupes you have ruined. I will learn the history of all the transactions by which you have gained the wealth that it pleases you to spend in courting the society and sharing the vices of men who — go with these rooms, *Louis Quinze*. Not a roguery of yours shall escape me, down even to your last notable connivance with an Italian reprobate for the criminal abduction of an heiress. All these particulars I will proclaim in the clubs to which you have gained admittance, in every club in London which you yet hope to creep into; all these I will impart to some

such authority in the Press as Mr. Henry Norreys; all these I will, upon the voucher of my own name, have so published in some journals of repute, that you must either tacitly submit to the revelations that blast you, or bring before a court of law actions that will convert accusations into evidence. It is but by sufferance that you are now in society; you are excluded when one man like me comes forth to denounce you. You try in vain to sneer at my menace — your white lips show your terror. I have rarely in life drawn any advantage from my rank and position; but I am thankful that they give me the power to make my voice respected and my exposure triumphant. Now, Baron Levy, will you go into your strong closet and hang yourself, or will you grant me my very moderate conditions? You are silent. I will relieve you, and state those conditions. Until the general election, about to take place, is concluded, you will obey me to the letter in all that I enjoin, — no demur and no scruple. And the first proof of obedience I demand is, your candid disclosure of all Mr. Audley Egerton's pecuniary affairs."

"Has my client, Mr. Egerton, authorized you to request of me that disclosure?"

"On the contrary, all that passes between us you will conceal from your client."

"You would save him from ruin? Your trusty *friend*, Mr. Egerton!" said the baron, with a livid sneer.

"Wrong again, Baron Levy. If I would save him from ruin, you are scarcely the man I should ask to assist me."

"Ah, I guess. You have learned how he —"

"Guess nothing, but obey in all things. Let us descend to your business room."

Levy said not a word until he had reconducted his visitor into his den of destruction, all gleaming with *spoliaria* in rosewood. Then he said this: "If, Lord L'Estrange, you seek but revenge on Audley Egerton, you need not have uttered those threats. I too — hate the man."

Harley looked at him wistfully, and the nobleman felt a pang that he had debased himself into a single feeling which the usurer could share. Nevertheless, the interview appeared

to close with satisfactory arrangements, and to produce amicable understanding. For as the baron ceremoniously followed Lord L'Estrange through the hall, his noble visitor said, with marked affability,—

"Then I shall see you at Lansmere with Mr. Egerton, to assist in conducting his election. It is a sacrifice of your time worthy of your friendship; not a step farther, I beg. Baron, I have the honour to wish you good-evening."

As the street door opened on Lord L'Estrange he again found himself face to face with Randal Leslie, whose hand was already lifted to the knocker.

"Ha, Mr. Leslie!—you too a client of Baron Levy's,—a very useful, accommodating man."

Randal stared and stammered. "I come in haste from the House of Commons on Mr. Egerton's business. Don't you hear the newspaper vendors crying out 'Great News, Dissolution of Parliament'?"

"We are prepared. Levy himself consents to give us the aid of his talents. Kindly, obliging, clever person!"

Randal hurried into Levy's study, to which the usurer had shrunk back, and was now wiping his brow with his scented handkerchief, looking heated and haggard, and very indifferent to Randal Leslie.

"How is this?" cried Randal. "I come to tell you first of Peschiera's utter failure, the ridiculous coxcomb, and I meet at your door the last man I thought to find there,—the man who foiled us all, Lord L'Estrange. What brought him to you? Ah, perhaps his interest in Egerton's election?"

"Yes," said Levy, sulkily. "I know all about Peschiera. I cannot talk to you now; I must make arrangements for going to Lansmere."

"But don't forget my purchase from Thornhill. I shall have the money shortly from a surer source than Peschiera."

"The squire?"

"Or a rich father-in-law."

In the mean while, as Lord L'Estrange entered Bond Street, his ears were stunned by vociferous cries from the Stentors employed by "Standard," "Sun," and "Globe,"

— “Great News! Dissolution of Parliament — Great News!” The gas-lamps were lighted; a brown fog was gathering over the streets, blending itself with the falling shades of night. The forms of men loomed large through the mist. The lights from the shops looked red and lurid. Loungers usually careless as to politics were talking eagerly and anxiously of King, Lords, Commons, “Constitution at stake,” “Triumph of liberal opinions,” — according to their several biases. Hearing, and scorning — unsocial, isolated — walked on Harley L’Estrange. With his direr passions had been roused up all the native powers that made them doubly dangerous. He became proudly conscious of his own great faculties, but exulted in them only so far as they could minister to the purpose which had invoked them.

“I have constituted myself a Fate,” he said inly; “let the gods be but neutral, while I weave the meshes. Then, as Fate itself when it has fulfilled its mission, let me pass away into shadow, with the still and lonely stride that none may follow, —

“‘Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness.’”

How weary I am of this world of men!” And again the cry “Great News — National Crisis — Dissolution of Parliament — Great News!” rang through the jostling throng. Three men, arm-in-arm, brushed by Harley, and were stopped at the crossing by a file of carriages. The man in the centre was Audley Egerton. His companions were an ex-minister like himself, and one of those great proprietors who are proud of being above office, and vain of the power to make and unmake Governments.

“You are the only man to lead us, Egerton,” said this last personage. “Do but secure your seat, and as soon as this popular fever has passed away, you must be something more than the leader of Opposition, — you must be the first man in England.”

“Not a doubt of that,” chimed in the fellow ex-minister, — a worthy man, perfect red-tapist, but inaudible in the reporters’ gallery. “And your election is quite safe, eh? All depends on that. You must not be thrown out at such a

time, even for a month or two. I hear that you will have a contest — some townsmen of the borough, I think. But the Lansmere interest must be all-powerful; and I suppose L'Estrange will come out and canvass for you. You are not the man to have lukewarm friends!"

"Don't be alarmed about my election. I am as sure of that as of L'Estrange's friendship."

Harley heard, with a grim smile, and passing his hand within his vest, laid it upon Nora's memoir.

"What could we do in parliament without you?" said the great proprietor, almost piteously.

"Rather what could I do without parliament? Public life is the only existence I own. Parliament is all in all to me. But we may cross now."

Harley's eye glittered cold as it followed the tall form of the statesman, towering high above all other passers-by.

"Ay," he muttered, "ay, rest as sure of my friendship as I was of thine! And be Lansmere our field of Philippi! There where thy first step was made in the only life that thou own'st as existence, shall the ladder itself rot from under thy footing. There, where thy softer victim slunk to death from the deceit of thy love, shall deceit like thine own dig a grave for thy frigid ambition. I borrow thy quiver of fraud; its still arrows shall strike thee; and thou too shalt say, when the barb pierces home, 'This comes from the hand of a friend.' Ay, at Lansmere, at Lansmere, shall the end crown the whole! Go, and dot on the canvas the lines for a lengthened perspective, where my eyes note already the vanishing point of the picture."

Then through the dull fog and under the pale gas-lights Harley L'Estrange pursued his noiseless way, soon distinguished no more amongst the various, motley, quick-succeeding groups, with their infinite sub-divisions of thought, care, and passion; while, loud over all their low murmurs, or silent hearts, were heard the tramp of horses and din of wheels, and the vociferous discordant cry that had ceased to attract and interest in the ears it vexed, "Great News, Great News — Dissolution of Parliament — Great News!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE scene is at Lansmere Park,—a spacious pile, commenced in the reign of Charles II.; enlarged and altered in the reign of Anne. Brilliant interval in the History of our National Manners, when even the courtier dreaded to be dull, and Sir Fopling raised himself on tiptoe to catch the ear of a wit; when the names of Devonshire and Dorset, Halifax and Carteret, Oxford and Bolingbroke, unite themselves, brother-like, with those of Hobbes and of Dryden, of Prior and Bentley, of Arbuthnot, Gay, Pope, and Swift; and still, wherever we turn, to recognize some ideal of great Lord or fine Gentleman, the Immortals of Literature stand by his side.

The walls of the rooms at Lansmere were covered with the portraits of those who illustrate that time which Europe calls the Age of Louis XIV. A L'Estrange, who had lived through the reigns of four English princes (and with no mean importance through all) had collected those likenesses of noble contemporaries. As you passed through the chambers—opening one on the other in that pomp of parade introduced with Charles II. from the palaces of France, and retaining its mode till Versailles and the Trianon passed, themselves, out of date—you felt you were in excellent company. What saloons of our day, demeaned to tailed coats and white waistcoats, have that charm of high breeding which speaks out from the canvas of Kneller and Jervis, Vivien and Rigaud? And withal, notwithstanding lace and brocade—the fripperies of artificial costume—still those who give interest or charm to that day look from their portraits like men,—raking or debonair, if you will, never mincing nor feminine. Can we say as much of the portraits of Lawrence? Gaze there on fair Marlborough; what delicate perfection of features, yet how easy in boldness, how serene in the conviction of power! So fair and so tranquil he might have looked through the cannon-

reek at Ramillies and Blenheim, suggesting to Addison the image of an angel of war. Ah, there, Sir Charles Sedley, the Lovelace of wits! Note that strong jaw and marked brow; do you not recognize the courtier who scorned to ask one favour of the king with whom he lived as an equal, and who stretched forth the right hand of man to hurl from a throne the king who had made his daughter—a countess?¹

Perhaps, from his childhood thus surrounded by the haunting faces—that spoke of their age as they looked from the walls—that age and those portraits were not without influence on the character of Harley L'Estrange. The whim and the daring, the passion for letters and reverence for genius, the mixture of levity and strength, the polished sauntering indolence, or the elastic readiness of energies once called into action,—all might have found their prototypes in the lives which those portraits rekindled. The deeper sentiment, the more earnest nature, which in Harley L'Estrange were commingled with the attributes common to a former age,—these, indeed, were of his own. *Our* age so little comprehended, while it colours us from its atmosphere! so full of mysterious and profound emotions, which our ancestors never knew!—will those emotions be understood by our descendants?

In this stately house were now assembled, as Harley's guests, many of the more important personages whom the slow length of this story has made familiar to the reader. The two candidates for the borough in the True Blue interest,—Audley Egerton and Randal Leslie; and Levy,—chief among the barons to whom modern society grants a seignorie of pillage, which, had a baron of old ever ventured to arrogate, burgess and citizen, soeman and bocman, villein and churl, would have burned him alive in his castle; the Duke

¹ Sedley was so tenacious of his independence that when his affairs were most embarrassed, he refused all pecuniary aid from Charles II. His bitter sarcasm, in vindication of the part he took in the deposition of James II., who had corrupted his daughter, and made her Countess of Dorchester, is well known. "As the king has made my daughter a countess, the least I can do, in common gratitude, is to assist in making his Majesty's daughter—a queen!"

di Serrano, still fondly clinging to his title of Doctor and pet name of Riccabocca; Jemima, not yet with the airs of a duchess, but robed in very thick silks, as the chrysalis state of a duchess; Violante, too, was there, sadly against her will, and shrinking as much as possible into the retirement of her own chamber. The Countess of Lansmere had deserted her lord, in order to receive the guests of her son; my lord himself, ever bent on being of use in some part of his country, and striving hard to distract his interest from his plague of a borough, had gone down into Cornwall to inquire into the social condition of certain troglodytes who worked in some mines which the earl had lately had the misfortune to wring from the Court of Chancery, after a lawsuit commenced by his grandfather; and a Blue Book, issued in the past session by order of parliament, had especially quoted the troglodytes thus devolved on the earl as bipeds who were in considerable ignorance of the sun, and had never been known to wash their feet since the day when they came into the world,—their world underground, chipped off from the Bottomless Pit!

With the countess came Helen Digby, of course; and Lady Lansmere, who had hitherto been so civilly cold to the wife elect of her son, had, ever since her interview with Harley at Knightsbridge, clung to Helen with almost a caressing fondness. The stern countess was tamed by fear; she felt that her own influence over Harley was gone; she trusted to the influence of Helen—in case of what?—ay, what? It was because the danger was not clear to her that her bold spirit trembled: superstitions, like suspicions, are “as bats among birds, and fly by twilight.” Harley had ridiculed the idea of challenge and strife between Audley and himself; but still Lady Lansmere dreaded the fiery emotions of the last, and the high spirit and austere self-respect which were proverbial to the first. Involuntarily she strengthened her intimacy with Helen. In case her alarm should appear justified, what mediator could be so persuasive in appeasing the angrier passions, as one whom courtship and betrothal sanctified to the gentlest?

On arriving at Lansmere, the countess, however, felt some-

what relieved. Harley had received her, if with a manner less cordial and tender than had hitherto distinguished it, still with easy kindness and calm self-possession. His bearing towards Audley Egerton still more reassured her: it was not marked by an exaggeration of familiarity or friendship,—which would at once have excited her apprehensions of some sinister design,—nor, on the other hand, did it betray, by covert sarcasms, an ill-suppressed resentment. It was exactly what, under the circumstances, would have been natural to a man who had received an injury from an intimate friend, which, in generosity or discretion, he resolved to overlook, but which those aware of it could just perceive had cooled or alienated the former affection. Indefatigably occupying himself with all the details of the election, Harley had fair pretext for absenting himself from Audley, who, really looking very ill, and almost worn out, pleaded indisposition as an excuse for dispensing with the fatigues of a personal canvass, and, passing much of his time in his own apartments, left all the preparations for contest to his more active friends. It was not till he had actually arrived at Lansmere that Audley became acquainted with the name of his principal opponent. Richard Avenel! the brother of Nora! rising up from obscurity, thus to stand front to front against him in a contest on which all his fates were cast. Egerton quailed as before an appointed avenger. He would fain have retired from the field; he spoke to Harley.

“How can *you* support all the painful remembrances which the very name of my antagonist must conjure up?”

“Did you not tell me,” answered Harley, “to strive against such remembrances,—to look on them as sickly dreams? I am prepared to brave them. Can you be more sensitive than I?”

Egerton durst not say more. He avoided all further reference to the subject. The strife raged around him, and he shut himself out from it,—shut himself up in solitude with his own heart. Strife enough there! Once, late at night, he stole forth and repaired to Nora’s grave. He stood there, amidst the rank grass and under the frosty starlight, long,

and in profound silence. His whole past life seemed to rise before him; and, when he regained his lonely room, and strove to survey the future, still he could behold only that past and that grave.

In thus declining all active care for an election, to his prospects so important, Audley Egerton was considered to have excuse, not only in the state of his health, but in his sense of dignity. A statesman so eminent, of opinions so well known, of public services so incontestable, might well be spared the personal trouble that falls upon obscurer candidates. And besides, according to current report, and the judgment of the Blue Committee, the return of Mr. Egerton was secure. But though Audley himself was thus indulgently treated, Harley and the Blue Committee took care to inflict double work upon Randal. That active young spirit found ample materials for all its restless energies. Randal Leslie was kept on his legs from sunrise to starlight. There does not exist in the Three Kingdoms a constituency more fatiguing to a candidate than that borough of Lansmere. As soon as you leave the High Street, wherein, according to immemorial usage, the Blue canvasser is first led, in order to put him into spirits for the toils that await him (delectable, propitious, constitutional High Street, in which at least two-thirds of the electors, opulent tradesmen employed at the Park, always vote for "my lord's man," and hospitably prepare wine and cakes in their tidy back-parlours!) — as soon as you quit this stronghold of the party, labyrinths of lanes and defiles stretch away into the farthest horizon; level ground is found nowhere; it is all up hill and down hill, — now rough, craggy pavements that blister the feet, and at the very first tread upon which all latent corns shook prophetically; now deep, muddy ruts, into which you sink ankle-deep, oozing slush creeping into the pores, and moistening the way for catarrh, rheum, cough, sore throat, bronchitis, and phthisis; black sewers and drains Acherontian, running before the thresholds, and so filling the homes behind with effluvia, that, while one hand clasps the grimy paw of the voter, the other instinctively guards from typhus and cholera your abhorrent nose. Not in those days had

mankind ever heard of a sanitary reform! and, to judge of the slow progress which that reform seems to make, sewer and drain would have been much the same if they had. Scot-and-lot voters were the independent electors of Lansmere, with the additional franchise of Freemen. Universal suffrage could scarcely more efficiently swamp the franchises of men who care a straw what becomes of Great Britain! With all Randal Leslie's profound diplomacy, all his art in talking over, deceiving, and (to borrow Dick Avenel's vernacular phrase) "humbugging" educated men, his eloquence fell flat upon minds invulnerable to appeals, whether to State or to Church, to Reform or to Freedom. To catch a Scot-and-lot voter by such frivolous arguments — Randal Leslie might as well have tried to bring down a rhinoceros by a pop-gun charged with split peas! The young man who so firmly believed that "knowledge was power" was greatly disgusted. It was here the ignorance that foiled him. When he got hold of a man with some knowledge, Randal was pretty sure to trick him out of a vote.

Nevertheless, Randal Leslie walked and talked on, with most creditable perseverance. The Blue Committee allowed that he was an excellent canvasser. They conceived a liking for him, mingled with pity. For, though sure of Egerton's return, they regarded Randal's as out of the question. He was merely there to keep split votes from going to the opposite side; to serve his patron, the ex-minister; shake the paws, and smell the smells which the ex-minister was too great a man to shake and to smell. But, in point of fact, none of that Blue Committee knew anything of the prospects of the election. Harley received all the reports of each canvass-day. Harley kept the canvass-book locked up from all eyes but his own, or it might be Baron Levy's, as Audley Egerton's confidential, if not strictly professional adviser, — Baron Levy, the millionaire, had long since retired from all acknowledged professions. Randal, however — close, observant, shrewd — perceived that he himself was much stronger than the Blue Committee believed; and, to his infinite surprise, he owed that strength to Lord L'Estrange's exertions.

on his behalf. For though Harley, after the first day, on which he ostentatiously showed himself in the High Street, did not openly canvass with Randal, yet when the reports were brought in to him, and he saw the names of the voters who gave one vote to Audley, and withheld the other from Randal, he would say to Randal, dead beat as that young gentleman was, "Slip out with me, the moment dinner is over, and before you go the round of the public-houses; there are some voters we must get for you to-night." And sure enough a few kindly words from the popular heir of the Lansmere baronies usually gained over the electors, from whom, though Randal had proved that all England depended on their votes in his favour, Randal would never have extracted more than a "Wu'll, I shall waute gin the Dauby coomes!" Nor was this all that Harley did for the younger candidate. If it was quite clear that only one vote could be won for the Blues, and the other was pledged to the Yellows, Harley would say, "Then put it down to Mr. Leslie," — a request the more readily conceded, since Audley Egerton was considered so safe by the Blues, and alone worth a fear by the Yellows.

Thus Randal, who kept a snug little canvass-book of his own, became more and more convinced that he had a better chance than Egerton, even without the furtive aid he expected from Avenel; and he could only account for Harley's peculiar exertions in his favour by supposing that Harley, unpractised in elections, and deceived by the Blue Committee, believed Egerton to be perfectly safe, and sought, for the honour of the family interest, to secure *both* the seats.

Randal's public cares thus deprived him of all opportunity of pressing his courtship on Violante; and, indeed, if ever he did find a moment in which he could steal to her reluctant side, Harley was sure to seize that very moment to send him off to canvass an hesitating freeman, or harangue in some public-house.

Leslie was too acute not to detect some motive hostile to his wooing, however plausibly veiled in the guise of zeal for his election, in this officiousness of Harley's. But Lord

L'Estrange's manner to Violante was so little like that of a jealous lover, and he was so well aware of her engagement to Randal, that the latter abandoned the suspicion he had before conceived, that Harley was his rival. And he was soon led to believe that Lord L'Estrange had another, more disinterested, and less formidable motive for thus stinting his opportunities to woo the heiress.

"Mr. Leslie," said Lord L'Estrange, one day, "the duke has confided to me his regret at his daughter's reluctance to ratify his own promise; and knowing the warm interest I take in her welfare, for his sake and her own; believing, also, that some services to herself, as well as to the father she so loves, give me a certain influence over her inexperienced judgment, he has even requested me to speak a word to her in your behalf!"

"Ah, if you would!" said Randal, surprised.

"You must give me the power to do so. You were obliging enough to volunteer to me the same explanations which you gave to the duke, his satisfaction with which induced him to renew or confirm the promise of his daughter's hand. Should those explanations content me, as they did him, I hold the duke bound to fulfil his engagement, and I am convinced that his daughter would, in that case, not be inflexible to your suit. But, till such explanations be given, my friendship for the father, and my interest in the child, do not allow me to assist a cause which, however, at present suffers little by delay."

"Pray, listen at once to those explanations."

"Nay, Mr. Leslie, I can now only think of the election. As soon as that is over, rely on it you shall have the amplest opportunity to dispel any doubts which your intimacy with Count di Peschiera and Madame di Negra may have suggested. *A propos* of the election, here is a list of voters you must see at once in Fish Lane. Don't lose a moment."

In the mean while, Richard Avenel and Leonard had taken up their quarters in the hotel appropriated to the candidates for the Yellows; and the canvass on that side was prosecuted with all the vigour which might be expected from operations

conducted by Richard Avenel, and backed by the popular feeling.

The rival parties met from time to time in the streets and lanes, in all the pomp of war,—banners streaming, fifes resounding (for bands and colours were essential proofs of public spirit, and indispensable items in a candidate's bills, in those good old days). When they thus encountered, very distant bows were exchanged between the respective chiefs; but Randal, contriving ever to pass close to Avenel, had ever the satisfaction of perceiving that gentleman's countenance contracted into a knowing wink, as much as to say, "All right, in spite of this tarnation humbug."

But now that both parties were fairly in the field, to the private arts of canvassing were added the public arts of oratory. The candidates had to speak, at the close of each day's canvass, out from wooden boxes, suspended from the windows of their respective hotels, and which looked like dens for the exhibition of wild beasts. They had to speak at meetings of Committees, meetings of electors, go the nightly round of enthusiastic public-houses, and appeal to the sense of an enlightened people through wreaths of smoke and odours of beer.

The alleged indisposition of Audley Egerton had spared him the excitement of oratory, as well as the fatigue of canvassing. The practised debater had limited the display of his talents to a concise, but clear and masterly exposition of his own views on the leading public questions of the day, and the state of parties, which, on the day after his arrival at Lansmere, was delivered at a meeting of his general Committee, in the great room of their hotel, and which was then printed and circulated amongst the voters.

Randal, though he expressed himself with more fluency and self-possession than are usually found in the first attempts of a public speaker, was not effective in addressing an unlettered crowd; for a crowd of this kind is all heart—and we know that Randal Leslie's heart was as small as heart could be. If he attempted to speak at his own intellectual level, he was so subtle and refining as to be incomprehensible;

if he fell into the fatal error — not uncommon to inexperienced orators — of trying to lower himself to the intellectual level of his audience, he was only elaborately stupid. No man can speak too well for a crowd,—as no man can write too well for the stage; but in neither case should he be rhetorical, or case in periods the dry bones of reasoning. It is to the emotions or to the humours that the speaker of a crowd must address himself; his eye must brighten with generous sentiment, or his lip must expand in the play of animated fancy or genial wit. Randal's voice, too, though pliant and persuasive in private conversation, was thin and poor when strained to catch the ear of a numerous assembly. The falsehood of his nature seemed to come out when he raised the tones which had been drilled into deceit. Men like Randal Leslie may become sharp debaters, admirable special pleaders; they can no more become orators than they can become poets. Educated audiences are essential to them, and the smaller the audience (that is, the more the brain supersedes the action of the heart) the better they can speak.

Dick Avenel was generally very short and very pithy in his addresses. He had two or three favourite topics, which always told. He was a fellow-townsmen,—a man who had made his own way in life; he wanted to free his native place from aristocratic usurpation; it was the battle of the electors, not his private cause, etc. He said little against Randal, — “Pity a clever young man should pin his future to two yards of worn-out red tape;” “He had better lay hold of the strong rope, which the People, in compassion to his youth, were willing yet to throw out to save him from sinking,” etc. But as for Audley Egerton, “the gentleman who would not show, who was afraid to meet the electors, who could only find his voice in a hole-and-corner meeting, accustomed all his venal life to dark and nefarious jobs” — Dick, upon that subject, delivered philippics truly Demosthenian. Leonard, on the contrary, never attacked Harley's friend, Mr. Egerton; but he was merciless against the youth who had filched reputation from John Burley, and whom he knew that Harley despised

as heartily as himself. And Randal did not dare to retaliate (though boiling over with indignant rage), for fear of offending Leonard's uncle. Leonard was unquestionably the popular speaker of the three. Though his temperament was a writer's, not an orator's; though he abhorred what he considered the theatrical exhibition of self, which makes what is called "delivery" more effective than ideas; though he had little interest at any time in party politics; though at this time his heart was far away from the Blues and Yellows of Lansmere, sad and forlorn,—yet, forced into action, the eloquence that was natural to his conversation poured itself forth. He had warm blood in his veins; and his dislike to Randal gave poignancy to his wit, and barbed his arguments with impassioned invective. In fact, Leonard could conceive no other motive for Lord L'Estrange's request to take part in the election than that nobleman's desire to defeat the man whom they both regarded as an impostor; and this notion was confirmed by some inadvertent expressions which Avenel let fall, and which made Leonard suspect that, if he were not in the field, Avenel would have exerted all his interest to return Randal instead of Egerton. With Dick's dislike to that statesman Leonard found it impossible to reason; nor, on the other hand, could all Dick's scoldings or coaxings induce Leonard to divert his siege on Randal to an assault upon the man who, Harley had often said, was dear to him as a brother.

In the mean while, Dick kept the canvass-book of the Yellows as closely as Harley kept that of the Blues; and in despite of many pouting fits and gusts of displeasure, took precisely the same pains for Leonard as Harley took for Randal. There remained, however, apparently unshaken by the efforts on either side, a compact body of about a Hundred and Fifty voters, chiefly freemen. Would they vote Yellow? Would they vote Blue? No one could venture to decide; but they declared that they would all vote the same way. Dick kept his secret "caucuses," as he called them, constantly nibbling at this phalanx. A hundred and fifty voters!—they had the election in their hands! Never were hands so cor-

dially shaken, so caressingly clung to, so fondly lingered upon ! But the votes still stuck as firm to the hands as if a part of the skin, or of the dirt,— which was much the same thing !

CHAPTER XX.

WHENEVER Audley joined the other guests of an evening — while Harley was perhaps closeted with Levy and committeemen, and Randal was going the round of the public-houses — the one with whom he chiefly conversed was Violante. He had been struck at first, despite his gloom, less perhaps by her extraordinary beauty than by something in the expression of her countenance which, despite differences in feature and complexion, reminded him of Nora; and when, by his praises of Harley, he drew her attention, and won into her liking, he discovered, perhaps, that the likeness which had thus impressed him came from some similarities in character between the living and the lost one,— the same charming combination of lofty thought and childlike innocence, the same enthusiasm, the same rich exuberance of imagination and feeling. Two souls that resemble each other will give their likeness to the looks from which they beam. On the other hand, the person with whom Harley most familiarly associated, in his rare intervals of leisure, was Helen Digby. One day, Audley Egerton, standing mournfully by the window of the sitting-room appropriated to his private use, saw the two, whom he believed still betrothed, take their way across the park, side by side. “Pray Heaven, that she may atone to him for all !” murmured Audley. “But ah, that it had been Violante ! Then I might have felt assured that the Future would efface the Past,— and found the courage to tell him all. And when last night I spoke of what Harley ought to be to England, how like were Violante’s eyes and smile to Nora’s, when Nora listened in delighted sympathy to the hopes of my own young ambition.” With a sigh he turned away, and

resolutely sat down to read and reply to the voluminous correspondence which covered the table of the busy public man. For Audley's return to parliament being considered by his political party as secure, to him were transmitted all the hopes and fears of the large and influential section of it whose members looked up to him as their future chief, and who in that general election (unprecedented for the number of eminent men it was fated to expel from parliament, and the number of new politicians it was fated to send into it) drew their only hopes of regaining their lost power from Audley's sanguine confidence in the reaction of that Public Opinion which he had hitherto so profoundly comprehended; and it was too clearly seen, that the seasonable adoption of his counsels would have saved the existence and popularity of the late Administration, whose most distinguished members could now scarcely show themselves on the hustings.

Meanwhile Lord L'Estrange led his young companion towards a green hill in the centre of the park, on which stood a circular temple, that commanded a view of the country round for miles. They had walked in silence till they gained the summit of the sloped and gradual ascent; and then, as they stood still, side by side, Harley thus spoke,—

“Helen, you know that Leonard is in the town, though I cannot receive him at the Park, since he is standing in opposition to my guests, Egerton and Leslie.”

HELEN. — “But that seems to me so strange. How — how could Leonard do anything that seems hostile to you?”

HARLEY. — “Would his hostility to me lower him in your opinion? If he know that I am his rival, does not rivalry include hate?”

HELEN. — “Oh, Lord L'Estrange, how can you speak thus; how so wrong yourself? Hate — hate to you! and from Leonard Fairfield!”

HARLEY. — “You evade my question. Would his hate or hostility to me affect your sentiments towards him?”

HELEN (looking down). — “I could not force myself to believe in it.”

HARLEY. — “Why?”

HELEN. — "Because it would be so unworthy of him."

HARLEY. — "Poor child! You have the delusion of your years. You deck a cloud in the hues of the rainbow, and will not believe that its glory is borrowed from the sun of your own fancy. But here, at least, you are not deceived. Leonard obeys but my wishes, and, I believe, against his own will. He has none of man's noblest attribute, Ambition."

HELEN. — "No ambition!"

HARLEY. — "It is vanity that stirs the poet to toil,—if toil the wayward chase of his own chimeras can be called. Ambition is a more masculine passion."

Helen shook her head gently, but made no answer.

HARLEY. — "If I utter a word that profanes one of your delusions, you shake your head and are incredulous. Pause: listen one moment to my counsels,—perhaps the last I may ever obtrude upon you. Lift your eyes; look around. Far as your eye can reach, nay, far beyond the line which the horizon forms in the landscape, stretch the lands of my inheritance. Yonder you see the home in which my forefathers for many generations lived with honour, and died lamented. All these, in the course of nature, might one day have been your own, had you not rejected my proposals. I offered you, it is true, not what is commonly called Love; I offered you sincere esteem, and affections the more durable for their calm. You have not been reared by the world in the low idolatry of rank and wealth; but even romance cannot despise the power of serving others, which rank and wealth bestow. For myself, hitherto indolence, and lately disdain, rob fortune of these nobler attributes. But she who will share my fortune may dispense it so as to atone for my sins of omission. On the other side, grant that there is no bar to your preference for Leonard Fairfield, what does your choice present to you? Those of his kindred with whom you will associate are unrefined and mean. His sole income is derived from precarious labours; the most vulgar of all anxieties — the fear of bread itself for the morrow — must mingle with all your romance, and soon steal from love all its poetry. You think his affection will console you for every sacrifice. Folly! the love of

poets is for a mist, a moonbeam, a denizen of air, a phantom that they call an Ideal. They suppose for a moment that they have found that Ideal in Chloe or Phyllis, Helen or a milkmaid. Bah! the first time you come to the poet with the baker's bill, where flies the Ideal? I knew one more brilliant than Leonard, more exquisitely gifted by nature; that one was a woman; she saw a man hard and cold as that stone at your feet,—a false, hollow, sordid worldling; she made him her idol, beheld in him all that history would not recognize in a Cæsar, that mythology would scarcely grant to an Apollo: to him she was the plaything of an hour; she died, and before the year was out he had married for money! I knew another instance,—I speak of myself. I loved before I was your age. Had an angel warned me then, I would have been incredulous as you. How that ended, no matter: but had it not been for that dream of maudlin delirium, I had lived and acted as others of my kind and my sphere,—married from reason and judgment, been now a useful and happy man. Pause, then. Will you still reject me for Leonard Fairfield? For the last time you have the option,—me and all the substance of waking life, Leonard Fairfield and the shadows of a fleeting dream. Speak! You hesitate. Nay, take time to decide.”

HELEN. — “Ah, Lord L'Estrange, you who have felt what it is to love, how can you doubt my answer; how think that I could be so base, so ungrateful as take from yourself what you call the substance of waking life, while my heart was far away, faithful to what you call a dream?”

HARLEY. — “But can you not dispel the dream?”

HELEN (her whole face one flush). — “It was wrong to call it dream! It is the reality of life to me. All things else are as dreams.”

HARLEY (taking her hand and kissing it with respect). — “Helen, you have a noble heart, and I have tempted you in vain. I regret your choice, though I will no more oppose it. I regret it, though I shall never witness your disappointment. As the wife of that man, I shall see and know you no more.”

HELEN. — “Oh, no! do not say that. Why? Wherefore?”

HARLEY (his brows meeting). — "He is the child of fraud and of shame. His father is my foe, and my hate descends to the son. He, too, the son, filches from me — But complaints are idle. When the next few days are over, think of me but as one who abandons all right over your actions, and is a stranger to your future fate. Pooh! dry your tears: so long as you love Leonard or esteem me, rejoice that our paths do not cross."

He walked on impatiently; but Helen, alarmed and wondering, followed close, took his arm timidly, and sought to soothe him. She felt that he wronged Leonard, — that he knew not how Leonard had yielded all hope when he learned to whom she was affianced. For Leonard's sake she conquered her bashfulness, and sought to explain. But at her first hesitating, faltered words, Harley, who with great effort suppressed the emotions which swelled within him, abruptly left her side, and plunged into the recesses of thick, far-spreading groves, that soon wrapped him from her eye.

While this conversation occurred between Lord L'Estrange and his ward, the *soi-disant* Riccabocca and Violante were walking slowly through the gardens. The philosopher, unchanged by his brightening prospects, — so far as the outer man was concerned, — still characterized by the red umbrella and the accustomed pipe, — took the way mechanically towards the sunniest quarter of the grounds, now and then glancing tenderly at Violante's downcast, melancholy face, but not speaking; only, at each glance, there came a brisker cloud from the pipe, as if obedient to a fuller heave of the heart.

At length, in a spot which lay open towards the south, and seemed to collect all the gentlest beams of the November sun, screened from the piercing east by dense evergreens, and flanked from the bleak north by lofty walls, Riccabocca paused and seated himself. Flowers still bloomed on the sward in front, over which still fluttered the wings of those later and more brilliant butterflies that, unseen in the genial days of our English summer, come with autumnal skies, and sport round the mournful steps of the coming winter, — types of those thoughts which visit and delight the contemplation

of age, while the current yet glides free from the iron ice, and the leaves yet linger on the boughs; thoughts that associate the memories of the departed summer with messages from suns that shall succeed the winter, and expand colours the most steeped in light and glory, just as the skies through which they gleam are darkening, and the flowers on which they hover fade from the surface of the earth, dropping still seeds, that sink deep out of sight below.

"Daughter," said Riccabocca, drawing Violante to his side with caressing arm,— "Daughter! Mark how they who turn towards the south can still find the sunny side of the landscape! In all the seasons of life, how much of chill or of warmth depends on our choice of the aspect! Sit down: let us reason."

Violante sat down passively, clasping her father's hand in both her own. Reason! harsh word to the ears of Feeling!

"You shrink," resumed Riccabocca, "from even the courtship, even the presence of the suitor in whom my honour binds me to recognize your future bridegroom."

Violante drew away her hands, and placed them before her eyes shudderingly.

"But," continued Riccabocca, rather peevishly, "this is not listening to reason. I may object to Mr. Leslie, because he has not an adequate rank or fortune to pretend to a daughter of my house; that would be what every one would allow to be reasonable in a father; except, indeed," added the poor sage, trying hard to be sprightly, and catching hold of a proverb to help him — "except, indeed, those wise enough to recollect that admonitory saying, '*Casa il figlio quando vuoi, e la figlia quando puoi*,' — [Marry your son when you will, your daughter when you can]. Seriously, if I overlook those objections to Mr. Leslie, it is not natural for a young girl to enforce them. What is reason in you is quite another thing from reason in me. Mr. Leslie is young, not ill-looking, has the air of a gentleman, is passionately enamoured of you, and has proved his affection by risking his life against that villainous Peschiera,— that is, he would have risked it had Peschiera not been shipped out of the way. If, then, you will

listen to reason, pray what can reason say against Mr. Leslie?"

"Father, I detest him!"

"*Cospetto!*" persisted Riccabocca, testily, "you have no reason to detest him. If you had any reason, child, I am sure that I should be the last person to dispute it. How can you know your own mind in such a matter? It is not as if you had seen any one else you could prefer. Not another man of your own years do you even know,—except, indeed, Leonard Fairfield, whom, though I grant he is handsomer, and with more imagination and genius than Mr. Leslie, you still must remember as the boy who worked in my garden. Ah, to be sure, there is Frank Hazelden; fine lad, but his affections are pre-engaged. In short," continued the sage, dogmatically, "there is no one else you *can*, by any possible caprice, prefer to Mr. Leslie; and for a girl who has no one else in her head to talk of detesting a well-looking, well-dressed, clever young man, is — a nonsense — '*Chi lascia il poco per haver l'assai nè l'uno, nè l'altro avera mai*' — which may be thus paraphrased,—The young lady who refuses a mortal in the hope of obtaining an angel, loses the one, and will never fall in with the other. So now, having thus shown that the darker side of the question is contrary to reason, let us look to the brighter. In the first place —"

"Oh, Father, Father!" cried Violante, passionately, "you to whom I once came for comfort in every childish sorrow! Do not talk to me with this cutting levity. See, I lay my head upon your breast, I put my arms around you; and now, can you reason me into misery?"

"Child, child, do not be so wayward. Strive, at least, against a prejudice that you cannot defend. My Violante, my darling, this is no trifle. Here I must cease to be the fond, foolish father, whom you can do what you will with. Here I am Alphonso, Duke di Serrano; for here my honour as noble and my word as man are involved. I, then, but a helpless exile, no hope of fairer prospects before me, trembling like a coward at the wiles of my unscrupulous kinsman, grasping at all chances to save you from his snares,—I my-

self offered your hand to Randal Leslie,— offered, promised, pledged it; and now that my fortunes seem assured, my rank in all likelihood restored, my foe crushed, my fears at rest,— now, does it become me to retract what I myself have urged? It is not the noble, it is the *parvenu*, who has only to grow rich, in order to forget those whom in poverty he hailed as his friends.¹ Is it for me to make the poor excuse, never heard on the lips of an Italian prince, ‘that I cannot command the obedience of my child;’ subject myself to the galling answer, ‘Duke of Serrano, you could once command that obedience, when, in exile, penury, and terror you offered me a bride without a dower’? Child, Violante, daughter of ancestors on whose honour never slander set a stain, I call on you to redeem your father’s plighted word.”

“Father, must it be so? Is not even the convent open to me? Nay, look not so coldly on me. If you could but read my heart! And oh! I feel so assured of your own repentance hereafter,— so assured that this man is not what you believe him. I so suspect that he has been playing throughout some secret and perfidious part.”

“Ha!” interrupted Riccabocca, “Harley has perhaps infected you with that notion.”

“No, no! But is not Harley, is not Lord L’Estrange one whose opinion you have cause to esteem? And if he distrusts Mr. Leslie —”

“Let him make good his distrust by such proof as will absolve my word, and I shall share your own joy. I have told him this. I have invited him to make good his suspicions,— he puts me off. He cannot do so,” added Riccabocca, in a dejected tone; “Randal has already so well explained all that Harley deemed equivocal. Violante, my name and my honour rest in your hands. Cast them away if you will; I cannot constrain you, and I cannot stoop to implore. *Noblesse oblige!* With your birth you took its duties. Let them

¹ Quando 'l villano è divenuto ricco

Non ha (*i. e.*, riconosce) parent nè amico

Italian Proverb.

decide between your vain caprice and your father's solemn remonstrance."

Assuming a sternness that he was far from feeling, and putting aside his daughter's arms, the exile walked away.

Violante paused a moment, shivered, looked round as if taking a last farewell of joy and peace and hope on earth, and then approaching her father with a firm step, she said, "I never rebelled, Father; I did but entreat. What you say is my law now, as it has ever been; and come what may, never shall you hear complaint or murmur from me. Poor Father, you will suffer more than I shall. Kiss me!"

About an hour afterwards, as the short day closed in, Harley, returning from his solitary wanderings, after he had parted from Helen, encountered on the terrace, before the house, Lady Lansmere and Audley Egerton arm in arm.

Harley had drawn his hat over his brows, and his eyes were fixed on the ground, so that he did not see the group upon which he came unawares, until Audley's voice startled him from his reverie.

"My dear Harley," said the ex-minister, with a faint smile, "you must not pass us by, now that you have a moment of leisure from the cares of the election. And, Harley, though we are under the same roof, I see you so little." Lord L'Estrange darted a quick glance towards his mother,—a glance that seemed to say, "You leaning on Audley's arm! Have you kept your promise?" And the eye that met his own reassured him.

"It is true," said Harley; "but you, who know that, once engaged in public affairs, one has no heart left for the ties of private life, will excuse me. And this election is so important!"

"And you, Mr. Egerton," said Lady Lansmere, "whom the election most concerns, seem privileged to be the only one who appears indifferent to success."

"Ay; but you are not indifferent?" said Lord L'Estrange, abruptly.

"No. How can I be so, when my whole future career may depend on it?"

Harley drew Egerton aside. "There is one voter you ought at least to call upon and thank. He cannot be made to comprehend that, for the sake of any relation, even for the sake of his own son, he is to vote against the Blues,—against you; I mean, of course, Nora's father, John Avenel. His vote and his son-in-law's gained your majority at your first election."

EGERTON. — "Call on John Avenel! Have you called?"

HARLEY (calmly). — "Yes. Poor old man, his mind has been affected ever since Nora's death. But your name as the candidate for the borough at that time,—the successful candidate for whose triumph the joy-bells chimed with her funeral knell,—your name brings up her memory; and he talks in a breath of her and of you. Come, let us walk together to his house; it is close by the Park Lodge."

The drops stood on Audley's brow! He fixed his dark handsome eyes, in mournful amaze, upon Harley's tranquil face.

"Harley, at last, then, you have forgotten the Past."

"No; but the Present is more imperious. All my efforts are needed to requite your friendship. You stand against her brother,—yet her father votes for you. And her mother says to her son, 'Let the old man alone. Conscience is all that is well alive in him; and he thinks if he were to vote against the Blues, he would sin against honour.' 'An electioneering prejudice,' some sceptics would say. But you must be touched by this trait of human nature,—in *her* father, too,—you, Audley Egerton, who are the soul of honour. What ails you?"

EGERTON. — "Nothing; a spasm at the heart; my old complaint. Well, I will call on the poor man later, but not now,—not with you. Nay, nay, I will not,—I cannot. Harley, just as you joined us, I was talking to your mother."

HARLEY. — "Ay, and what of?"

EGERTON. — "Yourself. I saw you from my windows walking with your betrothed. Afterwards I observed her coming home alone; and by the glimpse I caught of her gentle countenance, it seemed sad. Harley, do you deceive us?"

HARLEY. — "Deceive! I! How?"

EGERTON. — "Do you really feel that your intended marriage will bestow on you the happiness, which is my prayer, as it must be your mother's?"

HARLEY. — "Happiness, I hoped so. But perhaps —"

EGERTON. — "Perhaps what?"

HARLEY. — "Perhaps the marriage may not take place. Perhaps I have a rival; not an open one,— a secret, stealthy wooer, in one, too, whom I have loved, served, trusted. Question me not now. Such instances of treachery make one learn more how to prize a friendship honest, devoted, faithful as your own, Audley Egerton. But here comes your *protégé*, released awhile from his canvass, and your confidential adviser, Baron Levy. He accompanied Randal through the town to-day. So anxious is he to see that that young man does not play false, and regard his own interest before yours! Would that surprise you?"

EGERTON. — "You are too severe upon Randal Leslie. He is ambitious, worldly, has no surplus of affection at the command of his heart —"

HARLEY. — "Is it Randal Leslie you describe?"

EGERTON (with a languid smile). — "Yes, you see I do not flatter. But he is born and reared a gentleman; as such he would scarcely do anything mean. And, after all, it is with me that he must rise or fall. His very intellect must tell him that. But again I ask, do not strive to prepossess me against him. I am a man who could have loved a son. I have none. Randal, such as he is, is a sort of son. He carries on my projects and my interest in the world of men beyond the goal of the tomb."

Audley turned kindly to Randal.

"Well, Leslie, what report of the canvass?"

"Levy has the book, sir. I think we have gained ten fresh votes for you, and perhaps seven for me."

"Let me rid you of your book, Baron Levy," said Harley.

Just at this time Riccabocca and Violante approached the house, both silent. The Italian caught sight of Randal, and made him a sign to join them. The young lover glanced fear-

fully towards Harley, and then with alacrity bounded forward, and was soon at Violante's side. But scarce had Harley, surprised by Leslie's sudden disappearance, remarked the cause, than with equal abruptness he abandoned the whispered conference he had commenced with Levy, and hastening to Randal, laid hand on the young man's shoulder, exclaiming, "Ten thousand pardons to all three! But I cannot allow this waste of time, Mr. Leslie. You have yet an hour before it grows dark. There are three outvoters six miles off, influential farmers, whom you must canvass in person with my father's steward. Hasten to the stables; choose your own horse. To saddle, to saddle! Baron Levy, go and order my Lord's steward, Mr. Smart, to join Mr. Leslie at the stables; then come back to me, — quick. What! loitering still, Mr. Leslie! You will make me throw up your whole cause in disgust at your indolence and apathy."

Alarmed at this threat, Randal lifted his accusing eyes to heaven and withdrew.

Meanwhile Audley had drawn close to Lady Lansmere, who was leaning, in thought, over the balustrade of the terrace.

"Do you note," said Audley, whispering, "how Harley sprang forward when the fair Italian came in sight? Trust me, I was right. I know little of the young lady, but I have conversed with her. I have gazed on the changes in her face. If Harley ever love again, and if ever love influence and exalt his mind, wish with me that his choice may yet fall where I believe that his heart inclines it."

LADY LANSMERE. — "Ah, that it were so! Helen, I own, is charming; but — but — Violante is equal in birth! Are you not aware that she is engaged to your young friend Mr. Leslie?"

AUDLEY. — "Randal told me so; but I cannot believe it. In fact, I have taken occasion to sound that fair creature's inclinations, and if I know aught of women, her heart is not with Randal. I cannot believe her to be one whose affections are so weak as to be easily constrained; nor can I suppose that her father could desire to enforce a marriage that is almost a *mésalliance*. Randal must deceive himself; and from

something Harley just let fall, in our painful but brief conversation, I suspect that his engagement with Miss Digby is broken off. He promises to tell me more later. Yes," continued Audley, mournfully, "observe Violante's countenance, with its ever-varying play; listen to her voice, to which feeling seems to give the expressive music, and tell me whether you are not sometimes reminded of — of — In one word, there is one who, even without rank or fortune, would be worthy to replace the image of Leonora, and be to Harley — what Leonora could not; for sure I am that Violante loves him."

Harley, meanwhile, had lingered with Riccabocca and Violante, speaking but on indifferent subjects, obtaining short answers from the first, and none from the last, when the sage drew him a little aside, and whispered, "She has consented to sacrifice herself to my sense of honour. But, O Harley! if she be unhappy, it will break my heart. Either you must give me sufficient proof of Randal's unworthiness, to absolve me from my promise, or I must again entreat you to try and conciliate the poor child in his favour. All you say has weight with her; she respects you as — a second father."

Harley did not seem peculiarly flattered by that last assurance; but he was relieved from an immediate answer by the appearance of a man who came from the direction of the stables, and whose dress, covered with dust, and travel-stained, seemed like that of a foreign courier. No sooner did Harley catch sight of this person, than he sprang forward, and accosted him briefly and rapidly.

"You have been quick; I did not expect you so soon. You discovered the trace? You gave my letter —"

"And have brought back the answer, my Lord," replied the man, taking the letter from a leathern pouch at his side. Harley hastily broke open the seal, and glanced over the contents, which were comprised in a few lines.

"Good. Say not whence you came. Do not wait here; return at once to London."

Harley's face seemed so unusually cheerful as he rejoined the Italians, that the duke exclaimed, —

"A despatch from Vienna? My recall!"

"From Vienna, my dear friend! Not possible yet. I cannot calculate on hearing from the prince till a day or two before the close of this election. But you wish me to speak to Violante. Join my mother yonder. What can she be saying to Mr. Egerton? I will address a few words apart to your fair daughter, that may at least prove the interest in her fate taken by — her second father."

"Kindest of friends!" said the unsuspecting pupil of Machiavelli, and he walked towards the terrace. Violante was about to follow. Harley detained her.

"Do not go till you have thanked me; for you are not the noble Violante for whom I take you, unless you acknowledge gratitude to any one who delivers you from the presence of an admirer in Mr. Randal Leslie."

VIOLANTE. — "Ought I to hear this of one whom — whom —"

HARLEY. — "One whom your father obstinately persists in obtruding on your repugnance? Yet, O dear child, you who, when almost an infant, ere yet you knew what snares and pitfalls, for all who trust to another, lie under the sward at our feet, even when decked the fairest with the flowers of spring; you who put your small hands around my neck, and murmured in your musical voice, 'Save us,—save my father,' — you at least I will not forsake, in a peril worse than that which menaced you then,—a peril which affrights you more than that which threatened you in the snares of Peschiera. Randal Leslie may thrive in his meaner objects of ambition; those I fling to him in scorn: but *you!* the presuming varlet!" Harley paused a moment, half stifled with indignation. He then resumed, calmly, "Trust to me, and fear not. I will rescue this hand from the profanation of Randal Leslie's touch; and then farewell, for life, to every soft emotion. Before me expands the welcome solitude. The innocent saved, the honest righted, the perfidious stricken by a just retribution,—and then — what then? Why, at least I shall have studied Machiavelli with more effect than your wise father; and I shall lay him aside, needing no philosophy

to teach me never again to be deceived." His brow darkened; he turned abruptly away, leaving Violante lost in amaze, fear, and a delight, vague, yet more vividly felt than all.

CHAPTER XXI.

THAT night, after the labours of the day, Randal had gained the sanctuary of his own room, and seated himself at his table, to prepare the heads of the critical speech he would have now very soon to deliver on the day of nomination, — critical speech when, in the presence of foes and friends, reporters from London, and amidst all the jarring interests that he sought to weave into the sole self-interest of Randal Leslie, he would be called upon to make the formal exposition of his political opinions. Randal Leslie, indeed, was not one of those speakers whom either modesty, fastidiousness, or conscientious desire of truth predisposes towards the labour of written composition. He had too much cleverness to be in want of fluent period or ready commonplace, — the ordinary materials of oratorical impromptu; too little taste for the Beautiful to study what graces of diction will best adorn a noble sentiment; too obtuse a conscience to care if the popular argument were purified from the dross which the careless flow of a speech wholly extemporaneous rarely fails to leave around it. But this was no ordinary occasion. Elaborate study here was requisite, not for the orator, but the hypocrite. Hard task, to please the Blues, and not offend the Yellows; appear to side with Audley Egerton, yet insinuate sympathy with Dick Avenel; confront, with polite smile, the younger opponent whose words had lodged arrows in his vanity, which rankled the more gallingly because they had raised the skin of his conscience.

He had dipped his pen into the ink and smoothed the paper before him, when a knock was heard at the door.

"Come in," said he, impatiently. Levy entered saunteringly.

"I am come to talk over matters with you, *mon cher*," said the baron, throwing himself on the sofa. "And, first, I wish you joy of your prospects of success."

Randal postponed his meditated composition with a quick sigh, drew his chair towards the sofa, and lowered his voice into a whisper. "You think with me, that the chance of my success — is good?"

"Chance! Why, it is a rubber of whist, in which your partner gives you all the winnings, and in which the adversary is almost sure to revoke. Either Avenel or his nephew, it is true, must come in; but not both. Two *parvenus* aspiring to make a family seat of an earl's borough! Bah! too absurd!"

"I hear from Riccabocca (or rather the Duke di Serrano) that this same young Fairfield is greatly indebted to the kindness of Lord L'Estrange. Very odd that he should stand against the Lansmere interest."

"Ambition, *mon cher*. You yourself are under some obligations to Mr. Egerton. Yet, in reality, he has more to apprehend from you than from Mr. Fairfield."

"I disown obligations to Mr. Egerton. And if the electors prefer me to him (whom, by-the-by, they once burned in effigy), it is no fault of mine: the fault, if any, will rest with his own dearest friend, L'Estrange. I do not understand how a man of such clear sense as L'Estrange undoubtedly possesses, should be risking Egerton's election in his zeal for mine. Nor do his formal courtesies to myself deceive me. He has even implied that he suspects me of connivance with Peschiera's schemes on Violante. But those suspicions he cannot support. For of course, Levy, you would not betray me?"

"I! What possible interest could I serve in that?"

"None that I can discover, certainly," said Randal, relaxing into a smile. "And when I get into parliament, aided by the social position which my marriage will give me, I shall have so many ways to serve you. No, it is certainly your interest not to betray me; and I shall count on you as a witness, if a witness can be required."

"Count on me, certainly, my dear fellow," said the baron. "And I suppose there will be no witness the other way. Done for eternally is my poor dear friend Peschiera, whose cigars, by-the-by, were matchless;—I wonder if there will be any for sale. And if he were not so done for, it is not you, it is L'Estrange, that he would be tempted to do for "

"We may blot Peschiera out of the map of the future," rejoined Randal. "Men from whom henceforth we have nothing to hope or to fear are to us as the races before the deluge."

"Fine remark," quoth the baron, admiringly. "Peschiera, though not without brains, was a complete failure. And when the failure of one I have tried to serve is complete, the rule I have adopted through life is to give him up altogether."

"Of course," said Randal.

"Of course," echoed the baron. "On the other hand, you know that I like pushing forward young men of mark and promise. You really are amazingly clever; but how comes it you don't speak better? Do you know, I doubt whether you will do in the House of Commons all that I expected from your address and readiness in private life."

"Because I cannot talk trash vulgar enough for a mob? Pooh! I shall succeed wherever knowledge is really power. Besides, you must allow for my infernal position. You know, after all, that Avenel, if he can only return himself or his nephew, still holds in his hands the choice of the candidate upon our side. I cannot attack him; I cannot attack his insolent nephew—"

"Insolent!—not that, but bitterly eloquent. He hits you hard. You are no match for him, Randal, before a popular audience; though, *en petit comité*, the devil himself were hardly a match for *you*. But now to a somewhat more serious point. Your election you will win, your bride is promised to you; but the old Leslie lands, in the present possession of Squire Thornhill, you have not gained,—and your chance of gaining them is in great jeopardy. I did not like to tell you this morning,—it would have spoiled your

temper for canvassing; but I have received a letter from Thornhill himself. He has had an offer for the property, which is only £1000 short of what he asks. A city alderman, called Jobson, is the bidder; a man, it seems, of large means and few words. The alderman has fixed the date on which he must have a definite answer; and that date falls on the ——th, two days after that fixed for the poll at Lansmere. The brute declares he will close with another investment, if Thornhill does not then come in to his terms. Now, as Thornhill will accept these terms unless I can positively promise him better, and as those funds on which you calculated (had the marriage of Peschiera with Violante, and Frank Hazeldean with Madame di Negra, taken place) fail you, I see no hope for your being in time with the money, — and the old lands of the Leslies must yield their rents to a Jobson.”

“I care for nothing on earth like those old lands of my forefathers,” said Randal, with unusual vehemence; “I reverence so little amongst the living, and I do reverence the dead. And my marriage will take place so soon; and the dower would so amply cover the paltry advance required.”

“Yes; but the mere prospect of a marriage to the daughter of a man whose lands are still sequestered would be no security to a money-lender.”

“Surely,” said Randal, “you, who once offered to assist me when my fortunes were more precarious, might now accommodate me with this loan, as a friend, and keep the title-deeds of the estate as —”

“As a money-lender,” added the baron, laughing pleasantly. “No, *mon cher*, I will still lend you half the sum required in advance, but the other half is more than I can afford as friend, or hazard as money-lender; and it would damage my character, — be out of all rule, — if, the estates falling by your default of payment into my own hands, I should appear to be the real purchaser of the property of my own distressed client. But, now I think of it, did not Squire Hazeldean promise you his assistance in this matter?”

“He did so,” answered Randal, “as soon as the marriage

between Frank and Madame di Negra was off his mind. I meant to cross over to Hazeldean immediately after the election. How can I leave the place till then?"

"If you do, your election is lost. But why not write to the squire?"

"It is against my maxim to write where I can speak. However, there is no option; I will write at once. Meanwhile, communicate with Thornhill; keep up his hopes; and be sure, at least, that he does not close with this greedy alderman before the day fixed for decision."

"I have done all that already, and my letter is gone. Now, do your part: and if you write as cleverly as you talk, you would coax the money out from a stonier heart than poor Mr. Hazeldean's. I leave you now; good-night."

Levy took up his candlestick, nodded, yawned, and went.

Randal still suspended the completion of his speech, and indited the following epistle:—

MY DEAR MR. HAZELDEAN, — I wrote to you a few hasty lines on leaving town, to inform you that the match you so dreaded was broken off, and proposing to defer particulars till I could visit your kind and hospitable roof, which I trusted to do for a few hours during my stay at Lansmere, since it is not a day's journey hence to Hazeldean. But I did not calculate on finding so sharp a contest. In no election throughout the kingdom do I believe that a more notable triumph, or a more stunning defeat, for the great landed interest can occur. For in this town — so dependent on agriculture — we are opposed by a low and sordid manufacturer, of the most revolutionary notions, who has, moreover, the audacity to force his own nephew — that very boy whom I chastised for impertinence on your village green, son of a common carpenter — actually the audacity, I say, to attempt to force this peasant of a nephew, as well as himself, into the representation of Lansmere, against the earl's interest, against your distinguished brother, — of myself I say nothing. You should hear the language in which these two men indulge against all your family! If we are beaten by such persons in a borough supposed to be so loyal as Lansmere, every one with a stake in the country may tremble at such a prognostic of the ruin that must await not only our old English Constitution, but the existence of property itself. I need not say that on such an occasion I cannot spare myself. Mr. Egerton is ill too. All the fatigue of the canvass devolves

on me. I feel, my dear and revered friend, that I am a genuine Hazeldean, fighting your battle; and that thought carries me through all. I cannot, therefore, come to you till the election is over; and meanwhile you, and my dear Mrs. Hazeldean, must be anxious to know more about the affair that so preyed on both your hearts than I have yet informed you, or can well trust to a letter. Be assured, however, that the worst is over; the lady has gone abroad. I earnestly entreated Frank (who showed me Mrs. Hazeldean's most pathetic letter to him) to hasten at once to the Hall and relieve your minds. Unfortunately he would not be ruled by me, but talked of going abroad too—not, I trust (nay, I feel assured), in pursuit of Madame di Negra; but still—In short, I should be so glad to see you, and talk over the whole. Could you not come hither?—pray do. And now, at the risk of your thinking that in this I am only consulting my own interest (but no—your noble English heart will never so misjudge me!), I will add with homely frankness, that if you could accommodate me immediately with the loan you not long since so generously offered, you would save those lands once in my family from passing away from us forever. A city alderman—one Jobson—is meanly taking advantage of Thornhill's necessities, and driving a hard bargain for those lands. He has fixed the——th inst. for Thornhill's answer, and Levy (who is here assisting Mr. Egerton's election) informs me that Thornhill will accept his offer, unless I am provided with £10,000 beforehand; the other £10,000, to complete the advance required, Levy will lend me. Do not be surprised at the usurer's liberality; he knows that I am about shortly to marry a very great heiress (you will be pleased when you learn whom, and will then be able to account for my indifference to Miss Sticktorights), and her dower will amply serve to repay his loan and your own, if I may trust to your generous affection for the grandson of a Hazeldean! I have the less scruple in this appeal to you, for I know how it would grieve you that a Jobson, who perhaps never knew a grandmother, should foist your own kinsman from the lands of his fathers. Of one thing I am convinced,—we squires and sons of squires must make common cause against those great moneyed capitalists, or they will buy us all out in a few generations. The old race of country gentlemen is already much diminished by the grasping cupidity of such leviathans; and if the race be once extinct, what will become of the boast and strength of England?

Yours, my dear Mr. Hazeldean, with most affectionate and grateful respect,

RANDAL LESLIE.

CHAPTER XXII.

Nothing to Leonard could as yet be more distasteful or oppressive than his share in this memorable election. In the first place, it chafed the secret sores of his heart to be compelled to resume the name of Fairfield, which was a tacit disavowal of his birth. It had been such delight to him that the same letters which formed the name of Nora should weave also that name of Oran, to which he had given distinction, which he had associated with all his nobler toils, and all his hopes of enduring fame, — a mystic link between his own career and his mother's obscurer genius. It seemed to him as if it were rendering to her the honours accorded to himself, — subtle and delicate fancy of the affections, of which only poets would be capable, but which others than poets may perhaps comprehend! That earlier name of Fairfield was connected in his memory with all the ruder employments, the meaner trials of his boyhood; the name of Oran, with poetry and fame. It was his title in the ideal world, amongst all fair shapes and spirits. In receiving the old appellation, the practical world, with its bitterness and strife, returned to him as at the utterance of a spell. But in coming to Lansmere he had no choice. To say nothing of Dick, and Dick's parents, with whom his secret would not be safe; Randal Leslie knew that he had gone by the name of Fairfield, — knew his supposed parentage, and would be sure to proclaim them. How account for the latter name without setting curiosity to decipher the anagram it involved, and perhaps guiding suspicion to his birth from Nora, to the injury of her memory, yet preserved from stain?

His feelings as connected with Nora — sharpened and deepened as they all had been by his discovery of her painful narrative — were embittered still more by coming in contact with

her parents. Old John was in the same helpless state of mind and body as before, — neither worse nor better; but waking up at intervals with vivid gleams of interest in the election at the wave of a blue banner, at the cry of “Blue forever!” It was the old broken-down charger, who, dozing in the meadows, starts at the roll of the drum. No persuasions Dick could employ would induce his father to promise to vote even one Yellow. You might as well have expected the old Roman, with his monomaniac cry against Carthage, to have voted for choosing Carthaginians for consuls. But poor John, nevertheless, was not only very civil, but very humble to Dick, — “very happy to oblige the gentleman.”

“Your own son!” bawled Dick; “and here is your own grandson.”

“Very happy to serve you both; but you see you are the wrong colour.”

Then as he gazed at Leonard, the old man approached him with trembling knees, stroked his hair, looked into his face, piteously. “Be thee my grandson?” he faltered. “Wife, wife, Nora had no son, had she? My memory begins to fail me, sir; pray excuse it; but you have a look about the eyes that—” Old John began to weep, and his wife led him away.

“Don’t come again,” she said to Leonard, harshly, when she returned. “He’ll not sleep all night now.” And then, observing that the tears stood in Leonard’s eyes, she added, in softened tones, “I am glad to see you well and thriving, and to hear that you have been of great service to my son Richard, who is a credit and an honour to the family, though poor John cannot vote for him or for you against his conscience; and he should not be asked,” she added, firing up; “and it is a sin to ask it, and he so old, and no one to defend him but me. But defend him I will while I have life!”

The poet recognized woman’s brave, loving, wife-like heart here, and would have embraced the stern grandmother, if she had not drawn back from him; and, as she turned towards the room to which she had led her husband, she said over her shoulder, —

"I'm not so unkind as I seem, boy; but it is better for you, and for all, that you should not come to this house again, — better that you had not come into the town."

"Fie, Mother!" said Dick, seeing that Leonard, bending his head, silently walked from the room. "You should be prouder of your grandson than you are of me."

"Prouder of him who may shame us all yet?"

"What do you mean?"

But Mrs. Avenel shook her head and vanished.

"Never mind her, poor old soul," said Dick, as he joined Leonard at the threshold; "she always had her tempers. And since there is no vote to be got in this house, and one can't set a caucus on one's own father, — at least in this extraordinary rotten and prejudiced old country, which is quite in its dotage, — we'll not come here to be snubbed any more. Bless their old hearts, nevertheless!"

Leonard's acute sensibility in all that concerned his birth, deeply wounded by Mrs. Avenel's allusions, which he comprehended better than his uncle did, was also kept on the edge by the suspense to which he was condemned by Harley's continued silence as to the papers confided to that nobleman. It seemed to Leonard almost unaccountable that Harley should have read those papers, be in the same town with himself, and yet volunteer no communication. At length he wrote a few lines to Lord L'Estrange, bringing the matter that concerned him so deeply before Harley's recollection, and suggesting his own earnest interest in any information that could supply the gaps and omissions of the desultory fragments. Harley, in replying to this note, said, with apparent reason, "that it would require a long personal interview to discuss the subject referred to, and that such an interview, in the thick of the contest between himself and a candidate opposed to the Lansmere party, would be sure to get wind, be ascribed to political intrigues, be impossible otherwise to explain, and embarrass all the interests confided to their respective charge. That for the rest, he had not been unmindful of Leonard's anxiety, which must now mainly be to see justice done to the dead parent, and

learn the name, station, and character of the parent yet surviving. And in this Harley trusted to assist him as soon as the close of the poll would present a suitable occasion." The letter was unlike Harley's former cordial tone: it was hard and dry. Leonard respected L'Estrange too much to own to himself that it was unfeeling. With all his rich generosity of nature, he sought excuses for what he declined to blame. Perhaps something in Helen's manner or words had led Harley to suspect that she still cherished too tender an interest in the companion of her childhood; perhaps under this coldness of expression there lurked the burning anguish of jealousy. And, oh, Leonard so well understood, and could so nobly compassionate even in his prosperous rival, that torture of the most agonizing of human passions, in which all our reasonings follow the distorted writhings of our pain.

And Leonard himself, amidst his other causes of disquiet, was at once so gnawed and so humbled by his own jealousy. Helen, he knew, was still under the same roof as Harley. They, the betrothed, could see each other daily, hourly. He would soon hear of their marriage. She would be borne afar from the very sphere of his existence, — carried into a loftier region, accessible only to his dreams. And yet to be jealous of one to whom both Helen and himself were under such obligations debased him in his own esteem, — jealousy here was so like ingratitude. But for Harley, what could have become of Helen, left to his boyish charge, — he who had himself been compelled, in despair, to think of sending her from his side, to be reared into smileless youth in his mother's humble cottage, while he faced famine alone, gazing on the terrible river, from the bridge by which he had once begged for very alms, — begged of that Audley Egerton to whom he was now opposed as an equal; or flying from the fiend that glared at him under the lids of the haunting Chat-terton? No, jealousy here was more than agony, — it was degradation, it was crime! But, ah! if Helen were happy in these splendid nuptials! Was he sure even of that consolation? Bitter was the thought either way, — that she should wholly forget him, in happiness from which he stood ex-

cluded as a thing of sin; or sinfully herself remember, and be wretched!

With that healthful strength of will which is more often proportioned to the susceptibility of feeling than the world suppose, the young man at last wrenched himself for awhile from the iron that had entered into his soul, and forced his thoughts to seek relief in the very objects from which they otherwise would have the most loathingly recoiled. He aroused his imagination to befriend his reason; he strove to divine some motive not explained by Harley, not to be referred to the mere defeat, by counter-scheme, of the scheming Randal, nor even to be solved by any service to Audley Egerton, which Harley might evolve from the complicated meshes of the election, — some motive that could more interest his own heart in the contest, and connect itself with Harley's promised aid in clearing up the mystery of his parentage. Nora's memoir had clearly hinted that his father was of rank and station far beyond her own. She had thrown the glow of her glorious fancies over the ambition and the destined career of the lover in whom she had merged her ambition as poetess, and her career as woman. Possibly the father might be more disposed to own and to welcome the son, if the son could achieve an opening, and give promise of worth, in that grand world of public life in which alone reputation takes precedence of rank. Possibly, too, if the son thus succeeded, and became one whom a proud father could with pride acknowledge, possibly he might not only secure a father's welcome, but vindicate a mother's name. This marriage, which Nora darkly hinted she had been led to believe was fraudulent, might, after all, have been legal, — the ceremony concealed, even till now, by worldly shame at disparity of rank. But if the son could make good his own footing — there where rank itself owned its chiefs in talent — that shame might vanish. These suppositions were not improbable; nor were they uncongenial to Leonard's experience of Harley's delicate benignity of purpose. Here, too, the image of Helen allied itself with those of his parents, to support his courage and influence his new ambition. True,

that she was lost to him forever. No worldly success, no political honours, could now restore her to his side. But she might hear him named with respect in those circles in which alone she would hereafter move, and in which parliamentary reputation ranks higher than literary fame. And perhaps in future years, when love, retaining its tenderness, was purified from its passion, they might thus meet as friends. He might without a pang take her children on his knees, and say, perhaps in their old age, when he had climbed to a social equality even with her high-born lord, "It was the hope to regain the privilege bestowed on our childhood, that strengthened me to seek distinction when you and happiness forsook my youth." Thus regarded, the election, which had before seemed to him so poor and vulgar an exhibition of vehement passions for petty objects, with its trumpery of banners and its discord of trumpets, suddenly grew into vivid interest, and assumed dignity and importance. It is ever thus with all mortal strife. In proportion as it possesses, or is void of, the diviner something that quickens the pulse of the heart, and elevates the wing of the imagination, it presents a mockery to the philosopher, or an inspiration to the bard. Feel *that something*, and no contest is mean! Feel it not, and, like Byron, you may class with the slaughter of Cannæ that field which, at Waterloo, restored the landmarks of nations; or may jeer with Juvenal at the dust of Hannibal, because he sought to deliver Carthage from ruin, and free a world from Rome.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ONCE then, grappling manfully with the task he had undertaken, and constraining himself to look on what Riccabocca would have called "the southern side of things," whatever there was really great in principle or honourable to human nature, deep below the sordid details and pitiful interests apparent on the face of the agitated current, came clear to

his vision. The ardour of those around him began to be contagious: the generous devotion to some cause apart from self, which pervades an election, and to which the poorest voter will often render sacrifices that may be called sublime; the warm personal affection which community of zeal creates for the defender of beloved opinions, — all concurred to dispel that indifference to party politics, and counteract that disgust of their baser leaven, which the young poet had first conceived. He even began to look with complacency, for itself, on a career of toil and honours strange to his habitual labours and intellectual ambition. He threw the poetry of idea within him (as poets ever do) into the prose of action to which he was hurried forward. He no longer opposed Dick Avenel when that gentleman represented how detrimental it would be to his business at Screwstown if he devoted to his country the time and the acumen required by his mill and its steam-engine; and how desirable it would be, on all accounts, that Leonard Fairfield should become the parliamentary representative of the Avenels. "If, therefore," said Dick, "two of us cannot come in, and one must retire, leave it to me to arrange with the Committee that you shall be the one to persist. Oh, never fear but what all scruples of honour shall be satisfied. I would not for the sake of the Avenels have a word said against their representative."

"But," answered Leonard, "if I grant this, I fear that you have some intention of suffering the votes that your resignation would release to favour Leslie at the expense of Egerton."

"What the deuce is Egerton to you?"

"Nothing, except through my gratitude to his friend Lord L'Estrange."

"Pooh! I will tell you a secret. Levy informs me privately that L'Estrange will be well satisfied if the choice of Lansmere fall upon Leslie instead of Egerton; and I think I convinced my Lord — for I saw him in London — that Egerton would have no chance, though Leslie might."

"I must think that Lord L'Estrange would resist to the utmost any attempt to prefer Leslie — whom he despises — to

Egerton, whom he honours. And, so thinking, I too would resist it, as you may judge by the speeches which have so provoked your displeasure."

"Let us cut short a yarn of talk which, when it comes to likings and dislikings, might last to almighty crack: I'll ask you to do nothing that Lord L'Estrange does not sanction. Will that satisfy you?"

"Certainly, provided I am assured of the sanction."

And now, the important day preceding the poll, the day in which the candidates were to be formally nominated, and meet each other in all the ceremony of declared rivalry, dawned at last. The town-hall was the place selected for the occasion; and before sunrise, all the streets were resonant with music, and gay with banners.

Audley Egerton felt that he could not — without incurring some just sarcasm on his dread to face the constituency he had formerly represented, and by the malcontents of which he had been burned in effigy — absent himself from the town-hall, as he had done from balcony and hostel. Painful as it was to confront Nora's brother, and wrestle in public against all the secret memories that knit the strife of the present contest with the anguish that recalled the first, — still the thing must be done; and it was the English habit of his life to face with courage whatever he had to do.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE chiefs of the Blue party went in state from Lansmere Park; the two candidates in open carriages, each attended with his proposer and seconder. Other carriages were devoted to Harley and Levy, and the principal members of the Committee. Riccabocca was seized with a fit of melancholy or cynicism, and declined to join the procession. But just before they started, as all were assembling without the front door, the postman arrived with his welcome bag. There were let-

ters for Harley, some for Levy, many for Egerton, one for Randal Leslie.

Levy, soon hurrying over his own correspondence, looked, in the familiar freedom wherewith he usually treated his particular friends, over Randal's shoulder.

"From the squire?" said he. "Ah, he has written at last! What made him delay so long? Hope he relieves your mind?"

"Yes," cried Randal, giving way to a joy that rarely lighted up his close and secret countenance, — "yes, he does not write from Hazeldean, — not there when my letter arrived, in London, could not rest at the Hall, — the place reminded him too much of Frank; — went again to town, on the receipt of my first letter concerning the rupture of the marriage, to see after his son, and take up some money to pay off his post-obit. Read what he says: —

"So, while I was about a mortgage — never did I guess that I should be the man to encumber the Hazeldean estate — I thought I might as well add £20,000 as £10,000 to the total. Why should you be indebted at all to that Baron Levy? Don't have dealings with money-lenders. Your grandmother was a Hazeldean; and from a Hazeldean you shall have the whole sum required in advance for those Rood lands, — good light soil some of them. As to repayment, we'll talk of that later. If Frank and I come together again, as we did of old, why, my estates will be his some day, and he'll not grudge the mortgage, so fond as he always was of you; and if we don't come together, what do I care for hundreds or thousands, either more or less? So I shall be down at Lansmere the day after to-morrow, just in the thick of your polling. Beat the manufacturer, my boy, and stick up for the land. Tell Levy to have all ready. I shall bring the money down in good bank-notes, and a brace of pistols in my coat pocket to take care of them in case robbers get scent of the notes and attack me on the road, as they did my grandfather sixty years ago, come next Michaelmas. A Lansmere election puts one in mind of pistols. I once fought a duel with an officer in his Majesty's service, R.N., and had a ball lodged in my right shoulder, on account of an election at Lansmere; but I have forgiven Audley his share in that transaction. Remember me to him kindly. Don't get into a duel yourself; but I suppose manufacturers don't fight. — not that I blame them for that — far from it."

The letter then ran on to express surprise, and hazard conjecture, as to the wealthy marriage which Randal had announced as a pleasing surprise to the squire.

"Well," said Levy, returning the letter, "you *must* have written as cleverly as you talk, or the squire is a booby indeed."

Randal smiled, pocketed his letter, and responding to the impatient call of his proposer, sprang lightly into the carriage.

Harley, too, seemed pleased with the letters delivered to himself, and now joined Levy, as the candidates drove slowly off.

"Has not Mr. Leslie received from the squire an answer to that letter of which you informed me?"

"Yes, my Lord, the squire will be here to-morrow."

"To-morrow? Thank you for apprising me; his rooms shall be prepared."

"I suppose he will only stay to see Leslie and myself, and pay the money."

"Aha! Pay the money. Is it so, then?"

"Twice the sum, and, it seems, as a gift, which Leslie only asked as a loan. Really, my Lord, Mr. Leslie is a very clever man; and though I am at your commands, I should not like to injure him. With such matrimonial prospects, he could be a very powerful enemy; and if he succeed in parliament, still more so."

"Baron, these gentlemen are waiting for you. I will follow by myself."

CHAPTER XXV.

IN the centre of the raised platform in the town-hall sat the mayor. On either hand of that dignitary now appeared the candidates of the respective parties, — to his right, Audley Egerton and Leslie; to his left, Dick Avenel and Leonard.

The place was as full as it could hold. Rows of grimy faces peeped in, even from the upper windows outside the building. The contest was one that created intense interest, not only from public principles, but local passions. Dick Avenel, the son of a small tradesman, standing against the Right Honourable Audley Egerton, the choice of the powerful Lansmere aristocratic party, — standing, too, with his nephew by his side; taking, as he himself was wont to say, “the tarnation Blue Bull by both its oligarchical horns!” — there was a pluck and gallantry in the very impudence of the attempt to convert the important borough — for one member of which a great earl had hitherto striven, “with labour dire and weary woe” — into two family seats for the House of Avenel and the triumph of the Capelocracy.

This alone would have excited all the spare passions of a country borough; but, besides this, there was the curiosity that attached to the long-deferred public appearance of a candidate so renowned as the ex-minister, — a man whose career had commenced with his success at Lansmere, and who now, amidst the popular tempest that scattered his colleagues, sought to refit his vessel in the same harbour from which it had first put forth. New generations had grown up since the name of Audley Egerton had first fluttered the dovescotes in that Corioli. The questions that had then seemed so important were, for the most part, settled and at rest. But those present who remembered Egerton in the former day, were struck to see how the same characteristics of bearing and aspect which had distinguished his early youth revived their interest in the mature and celebrated man. As he stood up for a few moments, before he took his seat beside the mayor, glancing over the assembly, with its uproar of cheers and hisses, there was the same stately erectness of form and steadfastness of look, the same indefinable and mysterious dignity of externals, that imposed respect, confirmed esteem, or stilled dislike. The hisses involuntarily ceased.

The preliminary proceedings over, the proposers and seconds commenced their office.

Audley was proposed, of course, by the crack man of the

party, — a gentleman who lived on his means in a white house in the High Street, had received a University education, and was a cadet of a “County Family.” This gentleman spoke much about the Constitution, something about Greece and Rome; compared Egerton with William Pitt, also with Aristides; and sat down, after an oration esteemed classical by the few, and pronounced prosy by the many. Audley’s seconder, a burly and important maltster, struck a bolder key. He dwelt largely upon the necessity of being represented by gentlemen of wealth and rank, and not by “upstarts and adventurers.” (Cheers and groans.) “Looking at the candidates on the other side, it was an insult to the respectability of Lansmere to suppose its constituents could elect a man who had no pretensions whatever to their notice, except that he had once been a little boy in the town, in which his father kept a shop, — and a very noisy, turbulent, dirty little boy he was!” Dick smoothed his spotless shirt-front, and looked daggers, while the Blues laughed heartily, and the Yellows cried “Shame!” “As for the other candidate on the same side, he [the maltster] had nothing to say against him. He was, no doubt, seduced into presumption by his uncle and his own inexperience. It was said that that candidate, Mr. Fairfield, was an author and a poet; if so, he was unknown to fame, for no bookseller in the town had ever even heard of Mr. Fairfield’s works. Then it was replied Mr. Fairfield had written under another name. What would that prove? Either that he was ashamed of his name, or that the works did him no credit. For his part, he [the maltster] was an Englishman; he did not like anonymous scribblers; there was something not right in whatever was concealed. A man should never be afraid to put his name to what he wrote. But grant that Mr. Fairfield was a great author and a great poet, what the borough of Lansmere wanted was, not a member who would pass his time in writing sonnets to Peggy or Moggy, but a practical man of business, — a statesman, — such a man as Mr. Audley Egerton, a gentleman of ancient birth, high standing, and princely fortune. The member for such a place as Lansmere should have a proper degree of

wealth." ("Hear, hear!" from the Hundred and Fifty Hesitators, who all stood in a row at the bottom of the hall; and "Gammon!" "Stuff!" from some revolutionary but incorruptible Yellows.) Still the allusion to Egerton's private fortune had considerable effect with the bulk of the audience, and the maltster was much cheered on concluding. Mr. Avenel's proposer and seconder — the one a large grocer, the other the proprietor of a new shop for ticketed prints, shawls, blankets, and counterpanes, — a man, who, as he boasted, dealt with the People for ready money, and no mistake, at least none that *he* ever rectified — next followed. Both said much the same thing. Mr. Avenel had made his fortune by honest industry, was a fellow-townsmen, must know the interests of the town better than strangers, upright public principles, never fawn on governments, would see that the people had their rights, and cut down army, navy, and all other jobs of a corrupt aristocracy, etc. Randal Leslie's proposer, a captain on half-pay, undertook a long defence of army and navy, from the unpatriotic aspersions of the preceding speakers, which defence diverted him from the due praise of Randal, until cries of "Cut it short," recalled him to that subject; and then the topics he selected for eulogium were "amiability of character, so conspicuous in the urbane manners of his young friend;" "coincidence in the opinions of that illustrious statesman with whom he was conjoined;" "early tuition in the best principles; only fault, youth, — and that was a fault which would diminish every day." Randal's seconder was a bluff yeoman, an outvoter of weight with the agricultural electors. He was too straightforward by half, — adverted to Audley Egerton's early desertion of questions espoused by landed interest, hoped he had had enough of the large towns; and he (the yeoman) was ready to forgive and forget, but trusted that there would be no chance of burning their member again in effigy. As to the young gentleman, whose nomination he had the pleasure to second, did not know much about him; but the Leslies were an old family in the neighbouring county, and Mr. Leslie said he was nearly related to Squire Hazeldean, — as good a man as ever stood upon

shoe leather. He (the yeoman) liked a good breed in sheep and bullocks; and a good breed in men he supposed was the same thing. He (the yeoman) was not for abuses, — he was for King and Constitution. He should have no objection, for instance, to have tithes lowered, and the malt-tax repealed, — not the least objection. Mr. Leslie seemed to him a likely young chap, and uncommon well-spoken; and, on the whole, for aught he (the yeoman) could see, would do quite as well in parliament as nine-tenths of the gentlemen sent there. The yeoman sat down, little cheered by the Blues, much by the Yellows, and with a dim consciousness that somehow or other he had rather damaged than not the cause of the party he had been chosen to advocate. Leonard was not particularly fortunate in his proposer, a youngish gentleman, who, having tried various callings, with signal unsuccess, had come into a small independence, and set up for a literary character. This gentleman undertook the defence of poets, as the half-pay captain had undertaken that of the army and navy; and after a dozen sentences spoken through the nose, about the “moonlight of existence,” and “the oasis in the desert,” suddenly broke down, to the satisfaction of his impatient listeners. This failure was, however, redeemed by Leonard’s seconder, a master tailor, a practised speaker and an earnest, thinking man, sincerely liking and warmly admiring Leonard Fairfield. His opinions were delivered with brief simplicity, and accompanied by expressions of trust in Leonard’s talents and honesty, that were effective, because expressed with feeling.

These preparatory orations over, a dead silence succeeded, and Audley Egerton arose.

At the first few sentences, all felt they were in the presence of one accustomed to command attention, and to give to opinions the weight of recognized authority. The slowness of the measured accents, the composure of the manly aspect, the decorum of the simple gestures, — all bespoke and all became the minister of a great empire, who had less agitated assemblies by impassioned eloquence, than compelled their silent respect to the views of sagacity and experience. But what

might have been formal and didactic in another was relieved in Egerton by that air, tone, bearing of *gentleman*, which have a charm for the most plebeian audience. He had eminently these attributes in private life; but they became far more conspicuous whenever he had to appear in public. The "senatorius decor" seemed a phrase coined for him.

Audley commenced with notice of his adversaries in that language of high courtesy which is so becoming to superior station, and which augurs better for victory than the most pointed diatribes of hostile declamation. Inclining his head towards Avenel, he expressed regret that he should be opposed by a gentleman whose birth naturally endeared him to the town, of which he was a distinguished native, and whose honourable ambition was in itself a proof of the admirable nature of that Constitution, which admitted the lowliest to rise to its distinctions, while it compelled the loftiest to labour and compete for those honours which were the most coveted, because they were derived from the trust of their countrymen, and dignified by the duties which the sense of responsibility entailed. He paid a passing but generous compliment to the reputed abilities of Leonard Fairfield; and alluding with appropriate grace to the interest he had ever taken in the success of youth striving for place in the van of the new generation that marched on to replace the old, he implied that he did not consider Leonard as opposed to himself, but rather as an emulous competitor for a worthy prize with his "own young and valued friend, Mr. Randal Leslie." "They are happy at their years!" said the statesman, with a certain pathos. "In the future they see nothing to fear, in the past they have nothing to defend. It is not so with me." And then, passing on to the vague insinuations or bolder charges against himself and his policy proffered by the preceding speakers, Audley gathered himself up, and paused; for his eye here rested on the Reporters' seated round the table just below him; and he recognized faces not unfamiliar to his recollection when metropolitan assemblies had hung on the words which fell from lips then privileged to advise a king. And involuntarily it occurred to the ex-minister to

escape altogether from this contracted audience, — this election, with all its associations of pain, — and address himself wholly to that vast and invisible Public, to which those Reporters would transmit his ideas. At this thought his whole manner gradually changed. His eye became fixed on the farthest verge of the crowd; his tones grew more solemn in their deep and sonorous swell. He began to review and to vindicate his whole political life. He spoke of the measures he had aided to pass, of his part in the laws which now ruled the land. He touched lightly, but with pride, on the services he had rendered to the opinions he had represented. He alluded to his neglect of his own private fortunes; but in what detail, however minute, in the public business committed to his charge, could even an enemy accuse him of neglect? The allusion was no doubt intended to prepare the public for the news that the wealth of Audley Egerton was gone. Finally, he came to the questions that then agitated the day; and made a general but masterly exposition of the policy which, under the changes he foresaw, he should recommend his party to adopt.

Spoken to the motley assembly in that town-hall, Audley's speech extended to a circle of interest too wide for their sympathy. But that assembly he heeded not, — he forgot it. The reporters understood him, as their flying pens followed words which they presumed neither to correct nor to abridge. Audley's speech was addressed to the nation, — the speech of a man in whom the nation yet recognized a chief, desiring to clear all misrepresentation from his past career; calculating, if life were spared to him, on destinies higher than he had yet fulfilled; issuing a manifesto of principles to be carried later into power, and planting a banner round which the divided sections of a broken host might yet rally for battle and for conquest. Or perhaps, in the depths of his heart (not even comprehended by reporters, nor to be divined by the public), the uncertainty of life was more felt than the hope of ambition; and the statesman desired to leave behind him one full vindication of that *public* integrity and honour, on which, at least, his conscience acknowledged not a stain.

"For more than twenty years," said Audley, in conclusion, "I have known no day in which I have not lived for my country. I may at times have opposed the wish of the People, — I may oppose it now; but, so far as I can form a judgment, only because I prefer their welfare to their wish. And if — as I believe — there have been occasions on which, as one amongst men more renowned, I have amended the laws of England, confirmed her safety, extended her commerce, upheld her honour, I leave the rest to the censure of my enemies, and [his voice trembled] to the charity of my friends."

Before the cheers that greeted the close of this speech were over, Richard Avenel arose. What is called "the more respectable part" of an audience — namely, the better educated and better clad, even on the Yellow side of the question — winced a little for the credit of their native borough, when they contemplated the candidate pitted against the Great Commoner, whose lofty presence still filled the eye, and whose majestic tones yet sounded in the ear. But the vast majority on both sides, Blue and Yellow, hailed the rise of Dick Avenel as a relief to what, while it had awed their attention, had rather strained their faculties. The Yellows cheered and the Blues groaned; there was a tumultuous din of voices, and a reel to and fro of the whole excited mass of unwashed faces and brawny shoulders. But Dick had as much pluck as Audley himself; and by degrees, his pluck and his handsome features, and the curiosity to hear what he had to say, obtained him a hearing; and that hearing Dick having once got, he contrived to keep. His self-confidence was backed by a grudge against Egerton, that attained to the elevation of malignity. He had armed himself for this occasion with an arsenal of quotations from Audley's speeches, taken out of Hansard's Debates; and, garbling these texts in the unfairest and most ingenious manner, he contrived to split consistency into such fragments of inconsistency — to cut so many harmless sentences into such unpopular, arbitrary, tyrannical segments of doctrine — that he made a very pretty case against the enlightened and incorruptible Egerton, as shuffler and trimmer, defender of jobs, and eulogist of

Manchester massacres, etc. And all told the more because it seemed courted and provoked by the ex-minister's elaborate vindication of himself. Having thus, as he declared, "triumphantly convicted the Right Honourable Gentleman out of his own mouth," Dick considered himself at liberty to diverge into what he termed "the just indignation of a free-born Briton;" in other words, into every variety of abuse which bad taste could supply to acrimonious feeling. But he did it so roundly and dauntlessly, in such true hustings style, that for the moment, at least, he carried the bulk of the crowd along with him sufficiently to bear down all the resentful murmurs of the Blue Committee men, and the abashed shakes of the head with which the more aristocratic and well-bred among the Yellows signified to each other that they were heartily ashamed of their candidate. Dick concluded with an emphatic declaration that the Right Honourable Gentleman's day was gone by; that the people had been pillaged and plundered enough by pompous red-tapists, who only thought of their salaries, and never went to their offices except to waste the pen, ink, and paper which they did not pay for; that the Right Honourable Gentleman had boasted he had served his country for twenty years. Served his country!—he should have said served her *out*! (Much laughter.) Pretty mess his country was in now. In short, for twenty years the Right Honourable Gentleman had put his hands into his country's pockets. "And I ask you," bawled Dick, "whether any of you are a bit the better for all that he has taken out of them!" The Hundred and Fifty Hesitators shook their heads. "Noa, that we ben't!" cried the Hundred and Fifty, dolorously. "*You* hear THE PEOPLE!" said Dick, turning majestically to Egerton, who, with his arms folded on his breast, and his upper lip slightly curved, sat like "Atlas unremoved,"—"you hear THE PEOPLE! They condemn you and the whole set of you. I repeat here what I once vowed on a less public occasion, 'As sure as my name is Richard Avenel, you shall smart for'—Dick hesitated—'smart for your contempt of the just rights, honest claims, and enlightened aspirations of your

indignant countrymen. The schoolmaster is abroad, and the British Lion is aroused!'"

Dick sat down. The curve of contempt had passed from Egerton's lip; at the name of Avenel, thus harshly spoken, he had suddenly shaded his face with his hand.

But Randal Leslie next arose, and Audley slowly raised his eyes, and looked towards his *protégé* with an expression of kindly interest. What better *début* could there be for a young man warmly attached to an eminent patron who had been coarsely assailed, — for a political aspirant vindicating the principles which that patron represented? The Blues, palpitating with indignant excitement, all prepared to cheer every sentence that could embody their sense of outrage, even the meanest amongst the Yellows, now that Dick had concluded, dimly aware that their orator had laid himself terribly open, and richly deserved (more especially from the friend of Audley Egerton) whatever punishing retort could vibrate from the heart of a man to the tongue of an orator. A better opportunity for an honest young *débutant* could not exist; a more disagreeable, annoying, perplexing, unmanageable opportunity for Randal Leslie, the malice of the Fates could not have contrived. How could *he* attack Dick Avenel, — he who counted upon Dick Avenel to win his election? How could he exasperate the Yellows, when Dick's solemn injunction had been, "Say nothing to make the Yellows not vote for you"? How could he identify himself with Egerton's policy, when it was his own policy to make his opponents believe him an unprejudiced, sensible youth, who would come all right and all Yellow one of these days? Demosthenes himself would have had a sore throat worse than when he swallowed the golden cup of Harpalus, had Demosthenes been placed in so cursed a fix. Therefore Randal Leslie may well be excused if he stammered and boggled, if he was appalled by a cheer when he said a word in vindication of Egerton, and looked cringing and pitiful when he sneaked out a counter civility to Dick. The Blues were sadly disappointed, damped; the Yellows smirked and took heart. Audley Egerton's brows darkened. Harley, who was on the platform, half seen behind

the front row, a quiet listener, bent over and whispered dryly to Audley, "You should have given a lesson beforehand to your clever young friend. His affection for you overpowers him!"

Audley made no rejoinder, but tore a leaf out of his pocket-book, and wrote, in pencil, these words, "Say that you may well feel embarrassed how to reply to Mr. Avenel, because I had especially requested you not to be provoked to one angry expression against a gentleman whose father and brother-in-law gave the majority of two by which I gained my first seat in parliament; then plunge at once into general politics." He placed this paper in Randal's hand, just as that unhappy young man was on the point of a thorough breakdown. Randal paused, took breath, read the words attentively, and amidst a general titter; his presence of mind returned to him; he saw a way out of the scrape, collected himself, suddenly raised his head, and in tones unexpectedly firm and fluent, enlarged on the text afforded to him, — enlarged so well that he took the audience by surprise, pleased the Blues by an evidence of Audley's generosity, and touched the Yellows by so affectionate a deference to the family of their two candidates. Then the speaker was enabled to come at once to the topics on which he had elaborately prepared himself, and delivered a set harangue, very artfully put together, — temporizing it is true, and trimming, but full of what would have been called admirable tact and discretion in an old stager who did not want to commit himself to anybody or to anything. On the whole, the display became creditable, at least as an evidence of thoughtful reserve, rare in a man so young; too refining and scholastic for oratory, but a very good essay, — upon both sides of the question. Randal wiped his pale forehead and sat down, cheered, especially by the lawyers present, and self-contented. It was now Leonard's turn to speak. Keenly nervous, as men of the literary temperament are, constitutionally shy, his voice trembled as he began. But he trusted, unconsciously, less to his intellect than his warm heart and noble temper; and the warm heart prompted his words, and the noble temper gradually dignified his man-

ner. He took advantage of the sentences which Audley had put into Randal's mouth, in order to efface the impression made by his uncle's rude assault. "Would that the Right Honourable Gentleman had himself made that generous and affecting allusion to the services which he had deigned to remember, for, in that case, he [Leonard] was confident that Mr. Avenel would have lost all the bitterness which political contest was apt to engender in proportion to the earnestness with which political opinions were entertained. Happy it was when some such milder sentiment as that which Mr. Egerton had instructed Mr. Leslie to convey, preceded the sharp encounter, and reminded antagonists, as Mr. Leslie had so emphatically done, that every shield had two sides, and that it was possible to maintain the one side to be golden, without denying the truth of the champion who asserted the other side to be silver." Then, without appearing to throw over his uncle, the young speaker contrived to insinuate an apology on his uncle's behalf, with such exquisite grace and good feeling, that he was loudly cheered by both parties; and even Dick did not venture to utter the dissent which struggled to his lips.

But if Leonard dealt thus respectfully with Egerton, he had no such inducement to spare Randal Leslie. With the intuitive penetration of minds accustomed to analyze character and investigate human nature, he detected the varnished insincerity of Randal's artful address. His colour rose, his voice swelled, his fancy began to play, and his wit to sparkle, when he came to take to pieces his younger antagonist's rhetorical mosaic. He exposed the falsehood of its affected moderation; he tore into shreds the veil of words, with their motley woof of yellow and blue, and showed that not a single conviction could be discovered behind it. "Mr. Leslie's speech," said he, "puts me in mind of a ferry-boat; it seems made for no purpose but to go from one side to the other." The simile hit the truth so exactly that it was received with a roar of laughter: even Egerton smiled. "For myself," concluded Leonard, as he summed up his unsparing analysis, "I am new to party warfare; yet if I were not opposing Mr.

Leslie as a candidate for your suffrages, if I were but an elector, — belonging, as I do, to the people by my condition and my labours, — I should feel that he is one of those politicians in whom the welfare, the honour, the moral elevation of the people, find no fitting representative.”

Leonard sat down amidst great applause, and after a speech that raised the Yellows in their own estimation, and materially damaged Randal Leslie in the eyes of the Blues. Randal felt this, with a writhing of the heart, though a sneer on the lips. He glanced furtively towards Dick Avenel, on whom, after all, his election, in spite of the Blues, might depend. Dick answered the furtive glance by an encouraging wink. Randal turned to Egerton, and whispered to him, “How I wish I had had more practice in speaking, so that I could have done you more justice!”

“Thank you, Leslie; Mr. Fairfield has supplied any omission of yours, so far as I am concerned. And you should excuse him for his attack on yourself, because it may serve to convince you where your fault as a speaker lies.”

“Where?” asked Leslie, with jealous sullenness.

“In not believing a single word that you say,” answered Egerton, very dryly; and then turning away, he said aloud to his proposer, and with a slight sigh, “Mr. Avenel may be proud of his nephew! I wish that young man were on our side; I could train him into a great debater.”

And now the proceedings were about to terminate with a show of hands, when a tall, brawny elector in the middle of the hall suddenly arose, and said he had some questions to put. A thrill ran through the assembly, for this elector was the demagogue of the Yellows, — a fellow whom it was impossible to put down, a capital speaker, with lungs of brass. “I shall be very short,” said the demagogue. And therewith, under the shape of questions to the two Blue candidates, he commenced a most furious onslaught on the Earl of Lansmere, and the earl’s son, Lord L’Estrange, accusing the last of the grossest intimidation and corruption, and citing instances thereof as exhibited towards various electors in Fish Lane and the Back Slums, who had been turned from

Yellow promises by the base arts of Blue aristocracy, represented in the person of the noble lord, whom he now dared to reply. The orator paused, and Harley suddenly passed into the front of the platform, in token that he accepted the ungracious invitation. Great as had been the curiosity to hear Audley Egerton, yet greater, if possible, was the curiosity to hear Lord L'Estrange. Absent from the place for so many years, heir to such immense possessions, with a vague reputation for talents that he had never proved, — strange, indeed, if Blue and Yellow had not strained their ears and hushed their breaths to listen.

It is said that the poet is born, and the orator made, — a saying only partially true. Some men have been made poets, and some men have been born orators. Most probably Harley L'Estrange had hitherto never spoken in public; and he had not now spoken five minutes before all the passions and humours of the assembly were as much under his command as the keys of the instrument are under the hands of the musician. He had taken from nature a voice capable of infinite variety of modulation, a countenance of the most flexible play of expression; and he was keenly alive (as profound humourists are) equally to the ludicrous and the graver side of everything presented to his vigorous understanding. Leonard had the eloquence of a poet, Audley Egerton that of a parliamentary debater; but Harley had the rarer gift of eloquence in itself, apart from the matter it conveys or adorns, — that gift which Demosthenes meant by his triple requisite of an orator, which has been improperly translated "action," but means in reality "the *acting*," "the stage-play." Both Leonard and Audley spoke well, from the good sense which their speeches contained; but Harley could have talked nonsense, and made it more effective than sense, — even as a Kemble or Macready could produce effects from the trash talked by "The Stranger," which your merely accomplished performer would fail to extract from the beauties of Hamlet. The art of oratory, indeed, is allied more closely to that of the drama than to any other; and throughout Harley's whole nature there ran, as the reader may have noted (though quite unconsciously to

Harley himself), a tendency towards that concentration of thought, action, and circumstance on a single purpose, which makes the world form itself into a stage, and gathers various and scattered agencies into the symmetry and compactness of a drama. This tendency, though it often produces effects that appear artificially theatrical, is not uncommon with persons the most genuine and single-minded. It is, indeed, the natural inclination of quick energies springing from warm emotions. Hence the very history of nations in their fresh, vigorous, half-civilized youth always shapes itself into dramatic forms; while, as the exercise of sober reason expands with civilization, to the injury of the livelier faculties and more intuitive impulses, people look to the dramatic form of expression, whether in thought or in action, as if it were the antidote to truth, instead of being its abstract and essence.

But to return from this long and somewhat metaphysical digression: whatever might be the cause why Harley L'Estrange spoke so wonderfully well, there could be no doubt that wonderfully well he did speak. He turned the demagogue and his attack into the most felicitous ridicule, and yet with the most genial good-humour; described that virtuous gentleman's adventures in search of corruption through the pure regions of Fish Lane and the Back Slums; and then summed up the evidences on which the demagogue had founded his charge, with a humour so caustic and original that the audience were convulsed with laughter. From laughter Harley hurried his audience almost to the pathos of tears, — for he spoke of the insinuations against his father so that every son and every father in the assembly felt moved as at the voice of Nature.

A turn in a sentence, and a new emotion seized the assembly. Harley was identifying himself with the Lansmere electors. He spoke of his pride in being a Lansmere man, and all the Lansmere electors suddenly felt proud of him. He talked with familiar kindness of old friends remembered in his schoolboy holidays, rejoicing to find so many alive and prospering. He had a felicitous word to each.

“Dear old Lansmere!” said he, and the simple exclamation

won him the hearts of all. In fine, when he paused, as if to retire, it was amidst a storm of acclamation. Audley grasped his hand, and whispered, "I am the only one here not surprised, Harley. Now you have discovered your powers, never again let them slumber. What a life may be yours if you no longer waste it!" Harley extricated his hand, and his eye glittered. He made a sign that he had more to say, and the applause was hushed. "My Right Honourable friend chides me for the years that I have wasted. True; my years have been wasted, — no matter how nor wherefore! But *his*! how have *they* been spent? In such devotion to the public that those who know him not as I do, have said that he had not one feeling left to spare to the obscurer duties and more limited affections, by which men of ordinary talents and humble minds rivet the links of that social order which it is the august destiny of statesmen — like him who now sits beside me — to cherish and defend. But, for my part, I think that there is no being so dangerous as the solemn hypocrite, who, because he drills his cold nature into serving mechanically some conventional abstraction, — whether he calls it 'the Constitution' or 'the Public,' — holds himself dispensed from whatever, in the warm blood of private life, wins attachment to goodness, and confidence to truth. Let others, then, praise my Right Honourable friend as the incorruptible politician. Pardon me if I draw his likeness as the loyal sincere man, who might say with the honest priest 'that he could not tell a lie to gain heaven by it!' — and with so fine a sense of honour, that he would hold it a lie merely to conceal the truth." Harley then drew a brilliant picture of the type of chivalrous honesty, — of the ideal which the English attach to the phrase of "a perfect gentleman," applying each sentence to his Right Honourable friend with an emphasis that seemed to burst from his heart. To all of the audience, save two, it was an eulogium which the fervent sincerity of the eulogist alone saved from hyperbole. But Levy rubbed his hands, and chuckled inly; and Egerton hung his head, and moved restlessly on his seat. Every word that Harley uttered lodged an arrow in Audley's

breast. Amidst the cheers that followed this admirable sketch of the "loyal man," Harley recognized Leonard's enthusiastic voice. He turned sharply towards the young man: "Mr. Fairfield cheers this description of integrity, and its application; let him imitate the model set before him, and he may live to hear praise as genuine as mine from some friend who has tested his worth as I have tested Mr. Egerton's. Mr. Fairfield is a poet: his claim to that title was disputed by one of the speakers who preceded me!— unjustly disputed! Mr. Fairfield is every inch a poet. But, it has been asked, 'Are poets fit for the business of senates? Will they not be writing sonnets to Peggy and Moggy, when you want them to concentrate their divine imagination on the details of a beer bill?' Do not let Mr. Fairfield's friends be alarmed. At the risk of injury to the two candidates whose cause I espouse, truth compels me to say, that poets, when they stoop to action, are not less prosaic than the dull-est amongst us; they are swayed by the same selfish interests, they are moved by the same petty passions. It is a mistake to suppose that any detail in common life, whether in public or private, can be too mean to seduce the exquisite pliances of their fancy. Nay, in public life, we may trust them better than other men; for vanity is a kind of second conscience, and, as a poet has himself said, —

" 'Who fears not to do ill, yet fears the name,
And free from conscience, is a slave to shame.'

In private life alone we do well to be on our guard against these children of fancy, for they so devote to the Muse all their treasury of sentiment, that we can no more expect them to waste a thought on the plain duties of men, than we can expect the spendthrift, who dazzles the town, 'to fritter away his money in paying his debts.' But all the world are agreed to be indulgent to the infirmities of those who are their own deceivers and their own chastisers. Poets have more enthusiasm, more affection, more heart than others; but only for fictions of their own creating. It is in vain for us to attach them to ourselves by vulgar merit, by commonplace obliga-

tions, strive and sacrifice as we may. They are ungrateful to us, only because gratitude is so very unpoetical a subject. We lose them the moment we attempt to bind. Their love—

“ ‘Light as air, at sight of human ties,
Spreads its light wings, and in a moment flies.’ ”

They follow their own caprices, adore their own delusions, and, deeming the forms of humanity too material for their fantastic affections, conjure up a ghost, and are chilled to death by its embrace!”

Then, suddenly aware that he was passing beyond the comprehension of his audience, and touching upon the bounds of his bitter secret (for here he was thinking, not of Leonard, but of Nora), Harley gave a new and more homely direction to his terrible irony, — turned into telling ridicule the most elevated sentiments Leonard’s speech had conveyed, hastened on to a rapid view of political questions in general, defended Leslie with the same apparent earnestness and latent satire with which he had eulogized Audley, and concluded a speech which, for popular effect, had never been equalled in that hall, amidst a diapason of cheers that threatened to bring down the rafters.

In a few minutes more the proceedings were closed, a show of hands taken. The show was declared by the Mayor, who was a thorough Blue, in favour of the Right Hon. Audley Egerton and Randal Leslie, Esquire.

Cries of “No,” “Shame,” “Partial,” etc., a poll demanded on behalf of the other two candidates, and the crowd began to pour out of the hall.

Harley was the first who vanished, retreating by the private entrance. Egerton followed; Randal lingering, Avenel came up and shook hands with him openly; but whispered privately, “Meet me to-night in Lansmere Park, in the oak copse, about three hundred yards from the turnstile, at the town end of the park. We must see how to make all right. What a confounded humbug this has been!”

CHAPTER XXVI.

IF the vigour of Harley's address had taken by surprise both friend and foe, not one in that assembly — not even the conscience-stricken Egerton — felt its effect so deeply as the assailed and startled Leonard. He was at first perfectly stunned by sarcasms which he so ill deserved; nor was it till after the assembly had broken up, that Leonard could even conjecture the cause which had provoked the taunt and barbed its dart. Evidently Harley had learned (but learned only in order to misconceive and to wrong) Leonard's confession of love to Helen Digby. And now those implied accusations of disregard to the duties of common life not only galled the young man's heart, but outraged his honour. He felt the generous indignation of manhood. He must see Lord L'Estrange at once, and vindicate himself, — vindicate Helen; for thus to accuse one was tacitly to asperse the other.

Extricating himself from his own enthusiastic partisans, Leonard went straight on foot towards Lansmere House. The Park palings touched close upon the town, with a small turnstile for foot passengers. And as Leonard, availing himself of this entrance, had advanced some hundred yards or so through the park, suddenly, in the midst of that very copse in which Avenel had appointed to meet Leslie, he found himself face to face with Helen Digby herself.

Helen started, with a faint cry. But Leonard, absorbed in his own desire to justify both, hailed the sight, and did not pause to account for his appearance, nor to soothe her agitation.

"Miss Digby!" he exclaimed, throwing into his voice and manner that respect which often so cruelly divides the past familiarity from the present alienation, "Miss Digby, I rejoice to see you, — rejoice to ask your permission to relieve myself from a charge that in truth wounds even you, while levelled

but at me. Lord L'Estrange has just implied, in public, that I—I—who owe him so much, who have honoured him so truly, that even the just resentment I now feel half seems to me the ingratitude with which he charges me, has implied that—ah! Miss Digby, I can scarcely command words to say what it so humiliates me to have heard. But you know how false is all accusation that either of us could deceive our common benefactor. Suffer me to repeat to your guardian what I presumed to say to you when we last met, what you answered, and state how I left your presence."

"Oh, Leonard! yes; clear yourself in his eyes. Go! Unjust that he is, ungenerous Lord L'Estrange!"

"Helen Digby!" cried a voice, close at hand. "Of whom do you speak thus?"

At the sound of that voice Helen and Leonard both turned, and beheld Violante standing before them, her young beauty rendered almost sublime by the noble anger that lit her eyes, glowed in her cheeks, animated her stately form.

"Is it you who thus speak of Lord L'Estrange? You, Helen Digby, — *you!*"

From behind Violante now emerged Mr. Dale. "Softly, children," he said; and placing one hand on Violante's shoulder, he extended the other to Leonard. "What is this? Come hither to me, Leonard, and explain."

Leonard walked aside with the parson, and in a few sentences gave vent to his swelling heart.

The parson shared in Leonard's resentment; and having soon drawn from him all that had passed in his memorable interview with Helen, exclaimed, —

"Enough! Do not yet seek Lord L'Estrange yourself; I am going to see him, — I am here at his request. His summons, indeed, was for to-morrow; but the squire having written me a hurried line, requesting me to meet him at Lansmere to-morrow and proceed with him afterwards in search of poor Frank, I thought I might have little time for communications with Lord L'Estrange, unless I forestalled his invitation and came to-day. Well that I did so! I only arrived an hour since, found he was gone to the town-hall, and joined the

young ladies in the Park. Miss Digby, thinking it natural that I might wish to say something in private to my old young friend Violante, walked a few paces in advance. Thus, fortunately, I chanced to be here, to receive your account, and I trust to remove misunderstanding. Lord L'Estrange must now be returned. I will go back to the house. You, meanwhile, return to the town, I beseech you. I will come to you afterwards at your inn. Your very appearance in these grounds, even the brief words that have passed between Helen and you, might only widen the breach between yourself and your benefactor. I cannot bear to anticipate this. Go back, I entreat you. I will explain all, and Lord L'Estrange shall right you! That *is*, — that must be his intention!"

"*Is — must be his intention — when he has just so wronged me!*"

"Yes, yes," faltered the poor parson, mindful of his promise to L'Estrange not to reveal his own interview with that nobleman, and yet not knowing otherwise how to explain or to soothe; but still believing Leonard to be Harley's son, and remembering all that Harley had so pointedly said of atonement, in apparent remorse for crime, Mr. Dale was wholly at a loss himself to understand why Harley should have thus prefaced atonement by an insult. Anxious, however, to prevent a meeting between Harley and Leonard while both were under the influence of such feelings towards each other, he made an effort over himself, and so well argued in favour of his own diplomacy, that Leonard reluctantly consented to wait for Mr. Dale's report.

"As to reparation or excuse," said he, proudly, "it must rest with Lord L'Estrange. I ask it not. Tell him only this, — that if the instant I heard that she whom I loved and held sacred for so many years was affianced to him, I resigned even the very wish to call her mine — if that were desertion of man's duties, I am guilty. If to have prayed night and day that she who would have blessed my lonely and toilsome life may give some charm to his, not bestowed by his wealth and his greatness — if that were ingratitude, I am

ungrateful; let him still condemn me. I pass out of his sphere, — a thing that has crossed it a moment, and is gone. But Helen he must not blame, suspect, even by a thought. One word more. In this election, this strife for objects wholly foreign to all my habits, unsuited to my poverty, at war with aspirations so long devoted to fairer goals, though by obscurer paths, I obeyed but his will or whim, — at a moment too when my whole soul sickened for repose and solitude. I had forced myself at last to take interest in what I had before loathed. But in every hope for the future, every stimulant to ambition, Lord L'Estrange's esteem still stood before me. Now, what do I here longer? All of his conduct, save his contempt for myself, is an enigma. And unless he repeat a wish, which I would fain still regard as a law, I retire from the contest he has embittered; I renounce the ambition he has poisoned; and, mindful of those humble duties which he implies that I disdain, I return to my own home."

The parson nodded assent to each of these sentences; and Leonard, passing by Violante and Helen, with a salutation equally distant to both, retraced his steps towards the town.

Meanwhile Violante and Helen had also been in close conference, and that conference had suddenly endeared each to the other; for Helen, taken by surprise, agitated, overpowered, had revealed to Violante that confession of another attachment, which she had made to Lord L'Estrange, the rupture of her engagement with the latter. Violante saw that Harley was free. Harley, too, had promised to free herself. By a sudden flash of conviction, recalling his words, looks, she felt that she was beloved, — deemed that honour alone (while either was yet shackled) had forbidden him to own that love. Violante stood a being transformed, "blushing celestial rosy red," heaven at her heart, joy in her eyes, — she loved so well, and she trusted so implicitly! Then from out the overflow of her own hope and bliss she poured forth such sweet comfort to Helen, that Helen's arm stole around her; cheek touched cheek, — they were as sisters.

At another moment, Mr. Dale might have felt some amazement at the sudden affection which had sprung up between these young persons; for in his previous conversation with Violante, he had, as he thought, very artfully, and in a pleasant vein, sounded the young Italian as to her opinion of her fair friend's various good qualities, and Violante had rather shrunk from the title of "friend;" and though she had the magnanimity to speak with great praise of Helen, the praise did not sound cordial. But the good man was at this moment occupied in preparing his thoughts for his interview with Harley; he joined the two girls in silence, and, linking an arm of each within his own, walked slowly towards the house. As he approached the terrace he observed Riccabocca and Randal pacing the gravel walk side by side.

Violante, pressing his arm, whispered, "Let us go round the other way; I would speak with you a few minutes undisturbed."

Mr. Dale, supposing that Violante wished to dispense with the presence of Helen, said to the latter, "My dear young lady, perhaps you will excuse me to Dr. Riccabocca, — who is beckoning to me, and no doubt very much surprised to see me here, — while I finish what I was saying to Violante when we were interrupted."

Helen left them, and Violante led the parson round through the shrubbery, towards the side door in another wing of the house.

"What have you to say to me?" asked Mr. Dale, surprised that she remained silent.

"You will see Lord L'Estrange. Be sure that you convince him of Leonard's honour. A doubt of treachery so grieves his noble heart that perhaps it may disturb his judgment."

"You seem to think very highly of the heart of this Lord L'Estrange, child!" said the parson, in some surprise.

Violante blushed, but went on firmly, and with serious earnestness: "Some words which he — that is, Lord L'Estrange — said to me very lately, make me so glad that you are here, — that you will see him; for I know how good you are, and how wise, dear, dear Mr. Dale! He spoke as one who had

received some grievous wrong, which had abruptly soured all his views of life. He spoke of retirement, solitude, — he on whom his country has so many claims. I know not what he can mean, unless it be that his — his marriage with Helen Digby is broken off."

"Broken off! Is that so?"

"I have it from herself. You may well be astonished that she could even think of another after having known him!"

The parson fixed his eyes very gravely on the young enthusiast. But though her cheek glowed, there was in her expression of face so much artless, open innocence, that Mr. Dale contented himself with a slight shake of the head, and a dry remark, —

"I think it quite natural that Helen Digby should prefer Leonard Fairfield. A good girl, not misled by vanity and ambition, — temptations of which it behoves us all to beware; nor least, perhaps, young ladies suddenly brought in contact with wealth and rank. As to this nobleman's merits, I know not yet whether to allow or to deny them; I reserve my judgment till after our interview. This is all you have to say to me?"

Violante paused a moment. "I cannot think," she said, half smiling, — "I cannot think that the change that has occurred in him, — for changed he is, — that his obscure hints as to injury received, and justice to be done, are caused merely by his disappointment with regard to Helen. But you can learn that; learn if he be so very much disappointed. Nay, I think not!"

She slipped her slight hand from the parson's arm, and darted away through the evergreens. Half concealed amidst the laurels, she turned back, and Mr. Dale caught her eye, half arch, half melancholy; its light came soft through a tear.

"I don't half like this," muttered the parson; "I shall give Dr. Riccabocca a caution." So muttering, he pushed open the side door, and finding a servant, begged admittance to Lord L'Estrange.

Harley at that moment was closeted with Levy, and his countenance was composed and fearfully stern. "So, so, by

this time to-morrow," said he, "Mr. Egerton will be tricked out of his election by Mr. Randal Leslie! good! By this time to-morrow his ambition will be blasted by the treachery of his friends! good! By this time to-morrow the bailiffs will seize his person, — ruined, beggared, pauper, and captive, — all because he has trusted and been deceived! good! And if he blame you, prudent Baron Levy, if he accuse smooth Mr. Randal Leslie, forget not to say, 'We were both but the blind agents of your friend Harley L'Estrange. Ask *him* why you are so miserable a dupe.'"

"And might I now ask your Lordship for one word of explanation?"

"No, sir! — it is enough that I have spared *you*. But you were never my friend; I have no revenge against a man whose hand I never even touched."

The baron scowled, but there was a power about his tyrant that cowed him into actual terror. He resumed, after a pause, —

"And though Mr. Leslie is to be member for Lansmere, — thanks to you, — you still desire that I should —"

"Do exactly as I have said. My plans now never vary a hair's breadth."

The groom of the chambers entered.

"My Lord, the Reverend Mr. Dale wishes to know if you can receive him."

"Mr. Dale! he should have come to-morrow. Say that I did not expect him to-day; that I am unfortunately engaged till dinner, which will be earlier than usual. Show him into his room; he will have but little time to change his dress. By the way, Mr. Egerton dines in his own apartment."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE leading members of the Blue Committee were invited to dine at the Park, and the hour for the entertainment was indeed early, as there might be much need yet of active exer-

tion on the eve of a poll in a contest expected to be so close, and in which the inflexible Hundred and Fifty "Waiters upon Providence" still reserved their very valuable votes.

The party was gay and animated, despite the absence of Audley Egerton, who, on the plea of increased indisposition, had shut himself up in his rooms the instant that he had returned from the town-hall, and sent word to Harley that he was too unwell to join the party at dinner.

Randal was really in high spirits, despite the very equivocal success of his speech. What did it signify if a speech failed, provided the election was secure? He was longing for the appointment with Dick Avenel which was to make "all right!" The squire was to bring the money for the purchase of the coveted lands the next morning. Riccabocca had assured him, again and again, of Violante's hand. If ever Randal Leslie could be called a happy man, it was as he sat at that dinner taking wine with Mr. Mayor and Mr. Alderman, and looking, across the gleaming silver *plateau*, down the long vista into wealth and power.

The dinner was scarcely over, when Lord L'Estrange, in a brief speech, reminded his guests of the work still before them; and after a toast to the health of the future members for Lansmere, dismissed the Committee to their labours.

Levy made a sign to Randal, who followed the baron to his own room.

"Leslie, your election is in some jeopardy. I find, from the conversation of those near me at dinner, that Egerton has made such way amongst the Blues by his speech, and they are so afraid of losing a man who does them so much credit, that the Committee men not only talk of withholding from you their second votes and of plumping Egerton, but of subscribing privately amongst themselves to win over that coy body of a Hundred and Fifty, upon whom I know that Avenel counts in whatever votes he may be able to transfer to you."

"It would be very unhandsome in the Committee, which pretends to act for both of us, to plump Egerton," said Randal, with consistent anger; "but I don't think they can get those Hundred and Fifty without the most open and exorbi-

tant bribery, — an expense which Egerton will not pay, and which it would be very discreditable to Lord L'Estrange or his father to countenance."

"I told them flatly," returned Levy, "that, as Mr. Egerton's agent, I would allow no proceedings that might vitiate the election, but that I would undertake the management of these men myself; and I am going into the town in order to do so. I have also persuaded the leading Committee men to reconsider their determination to plump Egerton; they have decided to do as L'Estrange directs, and I know what he will say. You may rely on me," continued the baron, who spoke with a dogged seriousness, unusual to his cynical temper, "to obtain for you the preference over Audley, if it be in my power to do so. Meanwhile, you should really see Avenel this very night."

"I have an appointment with him at ten o'clock; and judging by his speech against Egerton, I cannot doubt on his aid to me, if convinced by his poll-books that he is not able to return both himself and his impertinent nephew. My speech, however sarcastically treated by Mr. Fairfield, must at least have disposed the Yellow party to vote rather for me than for a determined opponent like Egerton."

"I hope so; for your speech and Fairfield's answer have damaged you terribly with the Blues. However, your main hope rests on my power to keep those Hundred and Fifty rascals from splitting their votes on Egerton, and to induce them, by all means short of bringing myself before a Committee of the House of Commons for positive bribery, — which would hurt most seriously my present social position, — to give one vote to you. I shall tell them, as I have told the Committee, that Egerton is safe, and will pay nothing; but that you want the votes, and that I — in short, if they can be bought *upon tick*, I will buy them. Avenel, however, can serve you best here; for as they are all Yellows at heart, they make no scruple of hinting that they want twice as much for voting Blue as they will take for voting Yellow. And Avenel being a townsman, and knowing their ways, could contrive to gain them, and yet not bribe."

RANDAL (shaking his head incredulously). — "Net bribe!"

LEVY. — "Pooh! Not bribe so as to be found out."

There was a knock at the door. A servant entered and presented Mr. Egerton's compliments to Baron Levy, with a request that the baron would immediately come to his rooms for a few minutes.

"Well," said Levy, when the servant had withdrawn, "I must go to Egerton, and the instant I leave him I shall repair to the town. Perhaps I may pass the night there." So saying, he left Randal, and took his way to Audley's apartment.

"Levy," said the statesman, abruptly, upon the entrance of the baron, "have you betrayed my secret — my first marriage — to Lord L'Estrange?"

"No, Egerton; on my honour, I have not betrayed it."

"You heard his speech! Did you not detect a fearful irony under his praises, or is it but — but — my conscience?" added the proud man, through his set teeth.

"Really," said Levy, "Lord L'Estrange seemed to me to select for his praise precisely those points in your character which any other of your friends would select for panegyric."

"Ay, any other of my friends! — What friends?" muttered Egerton, gloomily. Then, rousing himself, he added, in a voice that had none of its accustomed clear firmness of tone, "Your presence here in this house, Levy, surprised me, as I told you at the first; I could not conceive its necessity. Harley urged you to come, — he with whom you are no favourite! You and he both said that your acquaintance with Richard Avenel would enable you to conciliate his opposition. I cannot congratulate you on your success."

"My success remains to be proved. The vehemence of his attack may be but a feint to cover his alliance to-morrow."

Audley went on without notice of the interruption. "There is a change in Harley, — to me and to all; a change, perhaps, not perceptible to others — but I have known him from a boy."

"He is occupied for the first time with the practical business of life. That would account for a much greater change than you remark."

"Do you see him familiarly, converse with him often?"

"No, and only on matters connected with the election. Occasionally, indeed, he consults me as to Randal Leslie, in whom, as your special *protégé*, he takes considerable interest."

"That, too, surprises me. Well, I am weary of perplexing myself. This place is hateful; after to-morrow I shall leave it, and breathe in peace. You have seen the reports of the canvass; I have had no heart to inspect them. Is the election as safe as they say?"

"If Avenel withdraws his nephew, and the votes thus released split off to you, you are secure."

"And you think his nephew will be withdrawn? Poor young man! defeat at his age, and with such talents, is hard to bear." Audley sighed.

"I *must* leave you now, if you have nothing important to say," said the baron, rising. "I have much to do, as the election is yet to be won, and—to you the loss of it would be—"

"Ruin, I know. Well, Levy, it is, on the whole, to your advantage that I should not lose. There may be more to get from me yet. And, judging by the letters I received this morning, my position is rendered so safe by the absolute necessity of my party to keep me up, that the news of my pecuniary difficulties will not affect me so much as I once feared. Never was my career so free from obstacle, so clear towards the highest summit of ambition; never, in my day of ostentatious magnificence, as it is now, when I am prepared to shrink into a lodging, with a single servant."

"I am glad to hear it; and I am the more anxious to secure your election, upon which this career must depend, because—nay, I hardly like to tell you—"

"Speak on."

"I have been obliged, by a sudden rush on all my resources, to consign some of your bills and promissory notes to another, who, if your person should not be protected from arrest by parliamentary privilege, might be harsh and—"

"Traitor!" interrupted Egerton, fiercely, all the composed contempt with which he usually treated the usurer giving

way, "say no more. How could I ever expect otherwise! You have foreseen my defeat, and have planned my destruction. Presume no reply! Sir, begone from my presence!"

"You will find that you have worse friends than myself," said the baron, moving to the door; "and if you are defeated, if your prospects for life are destroyed, I am the last man you will think of blaming. But I forgive your anger, and trust that to-morrow you will receive those explanations of my conduct which you are now in no temper to bear. I go to take care of the election."

Left alone, Audley's sudden passion seemed to forsake him.

He gathered together, in that prompt and logical precision which the habit of transacting public business bestows, all his thoughts, and sounded all his fears; and most vivid of every thought, and most intolerable of every fear, was the belief that the baron had betrayed him to L'Estrange.

"I cannot bear this suspense," he cried aloud and abruptly. "I will see Harley myself. Open as he is, the very sound of his voice will tell me at once if I am a bankrupt even of human friendship. If *that* friendship be secure, if Harley yet clasp my hand with the same cordial warmth, all other loss shall not wring from my fortitude one complaint."

He rang the bell; his valet, who was waiting in the ante-room, appeared.

"Go and see if Lord L'Estrange is engaged. I would speak with him."

The servant came back in less than two minutes.

"I find that my Lord is now particularly engaged, since he has given strict orders that he is not to be disturbed."

"Engaged! on what, whom with?"

"He is in his own room, sir, with a clergyman, who arrived, and dined here, to-day. I am told that he was formerly curate of Lansmere."

"Lansmere! curate! His name, his name! Not Dale?"

"Yes, sir, that is the name, — the Reverend Mr. Dale."

"Leave me," said Audley, in a faint voice. "Dale! the man who suspected Harley, who called on me in London,

spoke of a child, — my child, — and sent me to find but another grave! He closeted with Harley, — he!”

Audley sank back on his chair, and literally gasped for breath. Few men in the world had a more established reputation for the courage that dignifies manhood, whether the physical courage or the moral. But at that moment it was not grief, not remorse, that paralyzed Audley, — it was fear. The brave man saw before him, as a thing visible and menacing, the aspect of his own treachery, — that crime of a coward; and into cowardice he was stricken. What had he to dread? Nothing save the accusing face of an injured friend, — nothing but that. And what more terrible? The only being, amidst all his pomp of partisans, who survived to love him, the only being for whom the cold statesman felt the happy, living, human tenderness of private affection, lost to him forever! He covered his face with both hands, and sat in suspense of something awful, as a child sits in the dark, the drops on his brow, and his frame trembling.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MEANWHILE Harley had listened to Mr. Dale's vindication of Leonard with cold attention.

“Enough,” said he, at the close. “Mr. Fairfield (for so we will yet call him) shall see me to-night; and if apology be due to him, I will make it. At the same time, it shall be decided whether he continue this contest or retire. And now, Mr. Dale, it was not to hear how this young man wooed, or shrunk from wooing, my affianced bride, that I availed myself of your promise to visit me at this house. We agreed that the seducer of Nora Avenel deserved chastisement, and I promised that Nora Avenel's son should find a father. Both these assurances shall be fulfilled to-morrow. And you, sir,” continued Harley, rising, his whole form gradually enlarged by the dignity of passion, “who wear the garb appropriated

to the holiest office of Christian charity; you who have presumed to think that, before the beard had darkened my cheek, I could first betray the girl who had been reared under this roof, then abandon her,—sneak like a dastard from the place in which my victim came to die, leave my own son, by the woman thus wronged, without thought or care, through the perilous years of tempted youth, till I found him, by chance, an outcast in a desert more dread than Hagar's,—you, sir, who have for long years thus judged of me, shall have the occasion to direct your holy anger towards the rightful head; and in me, you who have condemned the culprit shall respect the judge.”

Mr. Dale was at first startled, and almost awed, by this unexpected burst. But, accustomed to deal with the sternest and the darkest passions, his calm sense and his habit of authority over those whose souls were bared to him, nobly recovered from their surprise. “My Lord,” said he, “first, with humility I bow to your rebuke, and entreat your pardon for my erring, and, as you say, my uncharitable opinions. We dwellers in a village and obscure pastors of a humble flock, we, mercifully removed from temptation, are too apt, perhaps, to exaggerate its power over those whose lots are cast in that great world which has so many gates ever open to evil. This is my sole excuse if I was misled by what appeared to me strong circumstantial evidence. But forgive me again if I warn you not to fall into an error perhaps little lighter than my own. Your passion, when you cleared yourself from reproach, became you. But ah, my Lord, when with that stern brow and those flashing eyes, you launched your menace upon another over whom you would constitute yourself the judge, forgetful of the divine precept, ‘Judge not,’ I felt that I was listening no longer to honest self-vindication,—I felt that I was listening to fierce revenge!”

“Call it revenge, or what you will,” said Harley, with sullen firmness; “but I have been stung too deeply not to sting. Frank with all, till the last few days, I have ever been. Frank to you, at least, even now, this much I tell you: I pretend to no virtue in what I still hold to be justice; but no

declamations nor homilies tending to prove that justice is sinful will move my resolves. As man I have been outraged, and as man I will retaliate. The way and the mode, the true criminal and his fitting sentence, you will soon learn, sir. I have much to do to-night; forgive me if I adjourn for the present all further conference."

"No, no; do not dismiss me. There is something, in spite of your present language, which so commands my interest; I see that there has been so much suffering where there is now so much wrath,—that I would save you from the suffering worse than all,—remorse. Oh, pause, my dear Lord, pause and answer me but two questions; then I will leave your after course to yourself."

"Say on, sir," said Lord L'Estrange, touched, and with respect.

"First, then, analyze your own feelings. Is this anger merely to punish an offender and to right the living,—for who can pretend to right the dead? Or is there not some private hate that stirs and animates and confuses all?"

Harley remained silent. Mr. Dale renewed,—

"You loved this poor girl. Your language even now reveals it. You speak of treachery: perhaps you had a rival who deceived you; I know not, guess not, whom. But if you would strike the rival, must you not wound the innocent son? And, in presenting Nora's child to his father, as you pledge yourself to do, can you mean some cruel mockery that, under seeming kindness, implies some unnatural vengeance?"

"You read well the heart of man," said Harley; "and I have owned to you that I am but man. Pass on; you have another question."

"And one more solemn and important. In my world of a village, revenge is a common passion; it is the sin of the un-instructed. The savage deems it noble! but Christ's religion, which is the sublime Civilizer, emphatically condemns it. Why? Because religion ever seeks to ennoble a man; and nothing so debases him as revenge. Look into your own heart, and tell me whether, since you have cherished this passion, you have not felt all sense of right and wrong con-

fused,—have not felt that whatever would before have seemed to you mean and base, appears now but just means to your heated end. Revenge is ever a hypocrite: rage, at least, strikes with the naked sword; but revenge, stealthy and patient, conceals the weapon of the assassin. My Lord, your colour changes. What is your answer to my question?"

"Oh," exclaimed Harley, with a voice thrilling in its mournful anguish, "it is not since I have cherished the revenge that I am changed, that right and wrong grow dark to me, that hypocrisy seems the atmosphere fit for earth. No; it is since the discovery that demands the vengeance. It is useless, sir," he continued impetuously,— "useless to argue with me. Were I to sit down, patient and impotent, under the sense of the wrong which I have received, I should feel, indeed, that debasement which you ascribe to the gratification of what you term revenge. I should never regain the self-esteem which the sentiment of power now restores to me; I should feel as if the whole world could perceive and jeer at my meek humiliation. I know not why I have said so much, — why I have betrayed to you so much of my secret mind, and stooped to vindicate my purpose. I never meant it. Again I say, we must close this conference." Harley here walked to the door, and opened it significantly.

"One word more, Lord L'Estrange,—but one. You will not hear me. I am a comparative stranger, but you have a friend, a friend dear and intimate, now under the same roof. Will you consent, at least, to take counsel of Mr. Audley Egerton? None can doubt his friendship for you; none can doubt that whatever he advise will be that which best becomes your honour. What, my Lord, you hesitate,—you feel ashamed to confide to your dearest friend a purpose which his mind would condemn? Then I will seek him, I will implore him to save you from what can but entail repentance."

"Mr. Dale, I must forbid you to see Mr. Egerton. What has passed between us ought to be as sacred to you as a priest of Rome holds confession. This much, however, I will say to content you: I promise that I will do nothing that shall

render me unworthy of Mr. Audley Egerton's friendship, or which his fine sense of honour shall justify him in blaming. Let that satisfy you."

"Ah, my Lord," cried Mr. Dale, pausing irresolute at the doorway, and seizing Harley's hand, "I should indeed be satisfied if you would submit yourself to higher counsel than mine,—than Mr. Egerton's, than man's. Have you never felt the efficacy of prayer?"

"My life has been wasted," replied Harley, "and I dare not, therefore, boast that I have found prayer efficacious. But, so far back as I can remember, it has at least been my habit to pray to Heaven, night and morning, until at least—until—" The natural and obstinate candour of the man forced out the last words, which implied reservation. He stopped short.

"Until you have cherished revenge? You have not dared to pray since? Oh, reflect what evil there is within us, when we dare not come before Heaven,—dare not pray for what we wish. You are moved. I leave you to your own thoughts."

Harley inclined his head, and the parson passed him by, and left him alone,—startled indeed; but was he softened?

As Mr. Dale hurried along the corridor, much agitated, Violante stole from a recess formed by a large bay window, and linking her arm in his, said anxiously, but timidly: "I have been waiting for you, dear Mr. Dale; and so long! You have been with Lord L'Estrange?"

"Well!"

"Why do you not speak? You have left him comforted, happier?"

"Happier! No."

"What!" said Violante, with a look of surprise, and a sadness not unmingled with petulance in her quick tone. "What! does he then so grieve that Helen prefers another?"

Despite the grave emotions that disturbed his mind, Mr. Dale was struck by Violante's question, and the voice in which it was said. He loved her tenderly. "Child, child," said he, "I am glad that Helen has escaped Lord L'Estrange. Beware, oh, beware how he excite any gentler interest in yourself. He is a dangerous man,—more dangerous for

glimpses of a fine original nature. He may well move the heart of the innocent and inexperienced, for he has strangely crept into mine. But *his* heart is swollen with pride and ire and malice."

"You mistake; it is false!" cried Violante, impetuously. "I cannot believe one word that would asperse him who has saved my father from a prison, or from death. You have not treated him gently. He fancies he has been wronged by Leonard, received ingratitude from Helen. He has felt the sting in proportion to his own susceptible and generous heart, and you have chided where you should have soothed. Poor Lord L'Estrange! And you have left him still indignant and unhappy?"

"Foolish girl! I have left him meditating sin; I have left him afraid to pray; I have left him on the brink of some design—I know not what—but which involves more than Leonard in projects of revenge; I have left him so, that if his heart be really susceptible and generous, he will wake from wrath to be the victim of long and unavailing remorse. If your father has influence over him, tell Dr. Riccabocca what I say, and bid him seek, and in his turn save, the man who saved himself. He has not listened to religion,—he may be more docile to philosophy. I cannot stay here longer,—I must go to Leonard."

Mr. Dale broke from Violante and hurried down the corridor; Violante stood on the same spot, stunned and breathless. Harley on the brink of some strange sin! Harley to wake, the victim of remorse! Harley to be saved, as he had saved her father! Her breast heaved, her colour went and came, her eyes were raised, her lips murmured. She advanced with soft footsteps up the corridor; she saw the lights gleaming from Harley's room, and suddenly they were darkened, as the inmate of the room shut to the door, with angry and impatient hand.

An outward act often betrays the inward mind. As Harley had thus closed the door, so had he sought to shut his heart from the intrusion of softer and holier thoughts. He had turned to his hearthstone, and stood on it, resolved and hard-

ened. The man who had loved with such pertinacious fidelity for so many years could not at once part with hate. A passion once admitted to his breast, clung to it with such rooted force! But woe, woe to thee, Harley L'Estrange, if to-morrow at this hour thou stand at the hearthstone, thy designs accomplished, knowing that, in the fulfilment of thy blind will, thou hast met falsehood with falsehood, and deception with deceit! What though those designs now seem so consummate, so just, so appropriate, so exquisite a revenge, — seem to thee the sole revenge wit can plan and civilized life allow: wilt thou ever wash from thy memory the stain that will sully thine honour? Thou, too, professing friendship still, and masking perfidy under smiles! Grant that the wrong be great as thou deem it, — be ten times greater: the sense of thy meanness, O gentleman and soldier, will bring the blush to thy cheek in the depth of thy solitude. Thou, who now thinkest others unworthy a trustful love, wilt feel thyself forever unworthy theirs. Thy seclusion will know not repose. The dignity of man will forsake thee. Thy proud eye will quail from the gaze. Thy step will no longer spurn the earth that it treads on. He who has once done a base thing is never again wholly reconciled to honour. And woe — thrice woe, if thou learn too late that thou hast exaggerated thy fancied wrong: that there is excuse, where thou seest none; that thy friend may have erred, but that his error is venial compared to thy fancied retribution!

Thus, however, in the superb elation of conscious power, though lavished on a miserable object, — a terrible example of what changes one evil and hateful thought, cherished to the exclusion of all others, can make in the noblest nature, — stood, on the hearth of his fathers, and on the abyss of a sorrow and a shame from which there could be no recall, the determined and scornful man.

A hand is on the door, — he does not hear it; a form passes the threshold, — he does not see it; a light step pauses, a soft eye gazes. Deaf and blind still to both.

Violante came on, gathering courage, and stood at the hearth by his side.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"LORD L'ESTRANGE, noble friend!"

"You! — and here — Violante? Is it I whom you seek? For what? Good heavens! what has happened? Why are you so pale; why tremble?"

"Have you forgiven Helen?" asked Violante, beginning with evasive question, and her cheek was pale no more.

"Helen, the poor child! I have nothing in her to forgive, much to thank her for. She has been frank and honest."

"And Leonard — whom I remember in my childhood — you have forgiven him?"

"Fair mediator," said Harley, smiling, though coldly, "happy is the man who deceives another; all plead for him. And if the man deceived cannot forgive, no one will sympathize or excuse."

"But Leonard did not deceive you?"

"Yes, from the first. It is a long tale, and not to be told to you; but I cannot forgive him."

"Adieu! my Lord. Helen must, then, still be very dear to you!" Violante turned away. Her emotion was so artless, her very anger so charming, that the love, against which, in the prevalence of his later and darker passions, he had so sternly struggled, rushed back upon Harley's breast; but it came only in storm.

"Stay, but talk not of Helen!" he exclaimed. "Ah, if Leonard's sole offence had been what you appear to deem it, do you think I could feel resentment? No; I should have gratefully hailed the hand that severed a rash and ungenial tie. I would have given my ward to her lover with such a dower as it suits my wealth to bestow. But his offence dates from his very birth. To bless and to enrich the son of a man who — Violante, listen to me. We may soon part, and forever. Others may misconstrue my actions; you, at least,

shall know from what just principle they spring. There was a man whom I singled out of the world as more than a brother. In the romance of my boyhood I saw one who dazzled my fancy, captivated my heart. It was a dream of Beauty breathed into waking life. I loved,—I believed myself beloved. I confided all my heart to this friend,—this more than brother; he undertook to befriend and to aid my suit. On that very pretext he first saw this ill-fated girl,—saw, betrayed, destroyed her; left me ignorant that her love, which I had thought mine, had been lavished so wildly on another; left me to believe that my own suit she had fled, but in generous self-sacrifice,—for she was poor and humbly born; that—oh, vain idiot that I was!—the self-sacrifice had been too strong for a young human heart, which had broken in the struggle; left me to corrode my spring of life in remorse; clasped my hand in mocking comfort, smiled at my tears of agony—not one tear himself for his own poor victim! And suddenly, not long since, I learned all this. And in the father of Leonard Fairfield, you behold the man who has poisoned all the well-spring of joy to me. You weep! Oh, Violante! the Past he has blighted and embittered,—*that* I could forgive; but the Future is blasted too. For just ere this treason was revealed to me, I had begun to awake from the torpor of my dreary penance, to look with fortitude towards the duties I had slighted, to own that the pilgrimage before me was not barren. And then, oh then, I felt that all love was not buried in a grave. I felt that you, had fate so granted, might have been all to my manhood which youth only saw through the delusion of its golden mists. True, I was then bound to Helen; true, that honour to her might forbid me all hope. But still, even to know that my heart was not all ashes, that I could love again, that that glorious power and privilege of our being was still mine, seemed to me so heavenly sweet. But then this revelation of falsehood burst on me, and all truth seemed blotted from the universe. I am freed from Helen; ah, freed, forsooth,—because not even rank and wealth, and benefits and confiding tenderness, could bind to me one human heart! Free from her; but be-

tween me and your fresh nature stands Suspicion as an Upas tree. Not a hope that would pass through the tainted air and fly to you, but falls dead under the dismal boughs. *I love!* Ha, ha! *I — I*, whom the past has taught the impossibility to be loved again. No: if those soft lips murmured ‘Yes’ to the burning prayer that, had I been free but two short weeks ago, would have rushed from the frank deeps of my heart, I should but imagine that you deceived yourself,—a girl’s first fleeting delusive fancy,—nothing more! Were you my bride, *Violante*, I should but debase your bright nature by my own curse of distrust. At each word of tenderness, my heart would say, ‘How long will this last; when will the deception come?’ Your beauty, your gifts, would bring me but jealous terror; eternally I should fly from the Present to the Future, and say, ‘These hairs will be gray, while flattering youth will surround her in the zenith of her charms.’ Why then do I hate and curse my foe? Why do I resolve upon revenge? I comprehend it now. I knew that there was something more imperious than the ghost of the Past that urged me on. Gazing on you, I feel that it was the dim sense of a mighty and priceless loss; it is not the dead *Nora*,—it is the living *Violante*. Look not at me with those reproachful eyes: they cannot reverse my purpose; they cannot banish suspicion from my sickened soul; they cannot create a sunshine in the midst of this ghastly twilight. Go, go; leave me to the sole joy that bequeaths no disappointment, the sole feeling that unites me to social man; leave me to my revenge.”

“Revenge! Oh, cruel!” exclaimed *Violante*, laying her hand on his arm. “And in revenge, it is your own life that you will risk!”

“My life, simple child! This is no contest of life against life. Could I bare to all the world my wrongs for their ribald laughter, I should only give to my foe the triumph to pity my frenzy, to shun the contest; or grant it, if I could find a second—and then fire in the air. And all the world would say, ‘Generous *Egerton*! soul of honour!’”

“*Egerton*, Mr. *Egerton*! He cannot be this foe? It is not on him you can design revenge,—you who spend all your

hours in serving his cause, you to whom he trusts so fondly, you who leaned yesterday on his shoulder, and smiled so cheerily in his face?"

"Did I? Hypocrisy against hypocrisy, snare against snare: *that* is my revenge."

"Harley, Harley! Cease, cease!"

The storm of passion rushed on unheeding.

"I seem to promote his ambition but to crush it into the mire. I have delivered him from the gentler gripe of an usurer, so that he shall hold at my option alms or a prison —"

"Friend, friend! Hush, hush!"

"I have made the youth he has reared and fostered into treachery like his own (your father's precious choice, Randal Leslie) mine instrument in the galling lesson how ingratitude can sting. His very son shall avenge the mother, and be led to his father's breast as victor, with Randal Leslie, in the contest that deprives sire and benefactor of all that makes life dear to ambitious egotism. And if, in the breast of Audley Egerton, there can yet lurk one memory of what I was to him and to truth, not his least punishment will be the sense that his own perfidy has so changed the man whose very scorn of falsehood has taught him to find in fraud itself the power of retribution."

"If this be not a terrible dream," murmured Violante, recoiling, "it is not your foe alone that you will deprive of all that makes life dear. Act thus — and what, in the future, is left to me?"

"To you? Oh, never fear. I may give Randal Leslie a triumph over his patron, but in the same hour I will unmask his villany, and sweep him forever from your path. What in the future is left to you? — your birthright and your native land; hope, joy, love, felicity. Could it be possible that in the soft but sunny fancy which plays round the heart of maiden youth, but still sends no warmth into its deeps, — could it be possible that you had honoured me with a gentler thought, it will pass away, and you will be the pride and delight of one of your own years, to whom the vista of Time is haunted by no chill-

ing spectres, one who can look upon that lovely face, and not turn away to mutter, 'Too fair, too fair for me!'

"Oh, agony!" exclaimed Violante, with sudden passion. "In my turn hear me. If, as you promise, I am released from the dreadful thought that he, at whose touch I shudder, can claim this hand, my choice is irrevocably made. The altars which await me will not be those of a human love. But oh, I implore you — by all the memories of your own life, hitherto, if sorrowful, unsullied, by the generous interest you yet profess for me, whom you will have twice saved from a danger to which death were mercy — leave, oh, leave to me the right to regard your image as I have done from the first dawn of childhood. Leave me the right to honour and revere it. Let not an act accompanied with a meanness — oh that I should say the word! — a meanness and a cruelty that give the lie to your whole life — make even a grateful remembrance of you an unworthy sin. When I kneel within the walls that divide me from the world, oh, let me think that I can pray for you as the noblest being that the world contains! Hear me! hear me!"

"Violante!" murmured Harley, his whole frame heaving with emotion, "bear with me. Do not ask of me the sacrifice of what seems to me the cause of manhood itself, — to sit down, meek and patient, under a wrong that debases me, with the consciousness that all my life I have been the miserable dupe to affections I deemed so honest, to regrets that I believed so holy. Ah, I should feel more mean in my pardon than you can think me in revenge! Were it an acknowledged enemy, I could open my arms to him at your bidding; but the perfidious friend! — ask it not. My cheek burns at the thought, as at the stain of a blow. Give me but to-morrow — one day — I demand no more — wholly to myself and to the past, and mould me for the future as you will. Pardon, pardon the ungenerous thoughts that extended distrust to *you*. I retract them; they are gone, — dispelled before those touching words, those ingenuous eyes. At your feet, Violante, I repent and I implore! Your father himself shall banish your sordid suitor. Before this hour to-morrow you

will be free. Oh, then, then! will you not give me this hand to guide me again into the paradise of my youth? Violante, it is in vain to wrestle with myself, to doubt, to reason, to be wisely fearful! I love, I love you! I trust again in virtue and faith. I place my fate in your keeping."

If at times Violante may appear to have ventured beyond the limit of strict maiden bashfulness, much may be ascribed to her habitual candour, her solitary rearing, and remoteness from the world, the very innocence of her soul, and the warmth of heart which Italy gives its daughters. But now that sublimity of thought and purpose which pervaded her nature, and required only circumstances to develop, made her superior to all the promptings of love itself. Dreams realized which she had scarcely dared to own; Harley free, Harley at her feet; all the woman struggling at her heart, mantling in her blushes, still stronger than love, stronger than the joy of being loved again, was the heroic will,—will to save him, who in all else ruled her existence, from the eternal degradation to which passion had blinded his own confused and warring spirit.

Leaving one hand in his impassioned clasp, as he still knelt before her, she raised on high the other. "Ah," she said, scarce audibly,— "ah, if heaven vouchsafe me the proud and blissful privilege to be allied to your fate, to minister to your happiness, never should I know one fear of your distrust. No time, no change, no sorrow — not even the loss of your affection — could make me forfeit the right to remember that you had once confided to me a heart so noble. But" — here her voice rose in its tone, and the glow fled from her cheek — "but, O Thou the Ever Present, hear and receive the solemn vow. If to me he refuse to sacrifice the sin that would debase him, that sin be the barrier between us evermore; and may my life, devoted to Thy service, atone for the hour in which he belied the nature he received from Thee! Harley, release me! I have spoken: firm as yourself, I leave the choice to you."

"You judge me harshly," said Harley, rising, with sullen anger; "but at least I have not the meanness to sell what I



VIOLANTE AND HARLEY.

hold as justice, though the bribe may include my last hope of happiness."

"Meanness! Oh, unhappy, beloved Harley!" exclaimed Violante, with such a gush of exquisite reproachful tenderness, that it thrilled him as the voice of the parting guardian angel. "Meanness! But it is that from which I implore you to save yourself. You cannot judge, you cannot see. You are dark, dark. Lost Christian that you are, what worse than heathen darkness to feign the friendship the better to betray; to punish falsehood by becoming yourself so false; to accept the confidence even of your bitterest foe, and then to sink below his own level in deceit? And oh, worse than all — to threaten that a son — son of the woman you professed to love — should swell your vengeance against a father! No! it was not you that said this,— it was the Fiend!"

"Enough!" exclaimed Harley, startled, conscience-stricken, and rushing into resentment, in order to escape the sense of shame. "Enough! you insult the man you professed to honour."

"I honoured the prototype of gentleness and valour. I honoured one who seemed to me to clothe with life every grand and generous image that is born from the souls of poets. Destroy that ideal, and you destroy the Harley whom I honoured. He is dead to me forever. I will mourn for him as his widow, faithful to his memory, weeping over the thought of what he was." Sobs choked her voice; but as Harley, once more melted, sprang forward to regain her side, she escaped with a yet quicker movement, gained the door, and darting down the corridor, vanished from his sight.

Harley stood still one moment, thoroughly irresolute,— nay, almost subdued. Then sternness, though less rigid than before, gradually came to his brow. The demon had still its hold in the stubborn and marvellous pertinacity with which the man clung to all that once struck root at his heart. With a sudden impulse that still withheld decision, yet spoke of sore-shaken purpose, he strode to his desk, drew from it Nora's manuscript, and passed from his room.

Harley had meant never to have revealed to Audley the

secret he had gained until the moment when revenge was consummated. He had contemplated no vain reproach. His wrath would have spoken forth in deeds, and then a word would have sufficed as the key to all. Willing, perhaps, to hail some extenuation of perfidy, though the possibility of such extenuation he had never before admitted, he determined on the interview which he had hitherto so obstinately shunned, and went straight to the room in which Audley Egerton still sat, solitary and fearful.

CHAPTER XXX.

EGERTON heard the well-known step advancing near and nearer up the corridor, heard the door open and reclose; and he felt, by one of those strange and unaccountable instincts which we call forebodings, that the hour he had dreaded for so many secret years had come at last. He nerved his courage, withdrew his hands from his face, and rose in silence. No less silent, Harley stood before him. The two men gazed on each other; you might have heard their breathing.

"You have seen Mr. Dale?" said Egerton, at length. "You know —"

"All!" said Harley, completing the arrested sentence.

Audley drew a long sigh. "Be it so; but no, Harley, you deceive yourself; you cannot know all, from any one living, save myself."

"My knowledge comes from the dead," answered Harley, and the fatal memoir dropped from his hand upon the table. The leaves fell with a dull, low sound, mournful and faint as might be the tread of a ghost, if the tread gave sound. They fell, those still confessions of an obscure, uncomprehended life, amidst letters and documents eloquent of the strife that was then agitating millions,—the fleeting, turbulent fears and hopes that torture parties and perplex a nation; the

stormy business of practical public life, so remote from individual love and individual sorrow.

Egerton's eye saw them fall. The room was but partially lighted. At the distance where he stood, he did not recognize the characters; but involuntarily he shivered, and involuntarily drew near.

"Hold yet awhile," said Harley. "I produce my charge, and then I leave you to dispute the only witness that I bring. Audley Egerton, you took from me the gravest trust one man can confide to another. You knew how I loved Leonora Avenel. I was forbidden to see and urge my suit; you had the access to her presence which was denied to myself. I prayed you to remove scruples that I deemed too generous, and to woo her not to dishonour, but to be my wife. Was it so? Answer."

"It is true," said Audley, his hand clenched at his heart.

"You saw her whom I thus loved,—her thus confided to your honour. You wooed her for yourself. Is it so?"

"Harley, I deny it not. Cease here. I accept the penalty; I resign your friendship; I quit your roof; I submit to your contempt; I dare not implore your pardon. Cease; let me go hence, and soon!" The strong man gasped for breath.

Harley looked at him steadfastly, then turned away his eyes, and went on. "Nay," said he, "is that ALL? You wooed her for yourself,—you won her. Account to me for that life which you wrenched from mine. You are silent. I will take on myself your task; you took that life and destroyed it."

"Spare me, spare me!"

"What was the fate of her who seemed so fresh from heaven when these eyes beheld her last? A broken heart, a dishonoured name, an early doom, a forgotten gravestone!"

"No, no — forgotten,—no!"

"Not forgotten! Scarce a year passed, and you were married to another. I aided you to form those nuptials which secured your fortunes. You have had rank and power and fame. Peers call you the type of English gentlemen; priests hold you as a model of Christian honour. Strip the mask,

Audley Egerton ; let the world know you for what you are ! ”

Egerton raised his head, and folded his arms calmly; but he said, with a melancholy humility, “I bear all from you; it is just. Say on.”

“You took from me the heart of Nora Avenel. You abandoned her, you destroyed. And her memory cast no shadow over your daily sunshine; while over my thoughts, over my life — oh, Egerton — Audley, Audley — how could you have deceived me thus ! ” Here the inherent tenderness under all this hate, the fount imbedded under the hardening stone, broke out. Harley was ashamed of his weakness, and hurried on,—

“Deceived,—not for an hour, a day, but through blighted youth, through listless manhood,—you suffered me to nurse the remorse that should have been your own; her life slain, mine wasted,—and shall neither of us have revenge ? ”

“Revenge ! Ah, Harley, you have had it ! ”

“No, but I await it ! Not in vain from the charnel have come to me the records I produce. And whom did fate select to discover the wrongs of the mother, whom appoint as her avenger ? Your son,—your own son; your abandoned, nameless son ! ”

“Son ! son ! ”

“Whom I delivered from famine, or from worse; and who, in return, has given into my hands the evidence which proclaims in you the perjured friend of Harley L’Estrange, and the fraudulent seducer, under mock marriage forms — worse than all franker sin — of Leonora Avenel.”

“It is false ! false ! ” exclaimed Egerton, all his stateliness and all his energy restored to him. “I forbid you to speak thus to me. I forbid you by one word to sully the memory of my lawful wife ! ”

“Ah ! ” said Harley, startled. “Ah ! false ? prove *that*, and revenge is over ! Thank Heaven ! ”

“Prove it ! What so easy ? And wherefore have I delayed the proof; wherefore concealed, but from tenderness to you, —dread, too — a selfish but human dread — to lose in you the

sole esteem that I covet; the only mourner who would have shed one tear over the stone inscribed with some lying epitaph, in which it will suit a party purpose to proclaim the gratitude of a nation. Vain hope. I resign it! But you spoke of a son. Alas, alas! you are again deceived. I heard that I had a son,— years, long years ago. I sought him, and found a grave. But bless you, Harley, if you succoured one whom you even erringly suspect to be Leonora's child!" He stretched forth his hands as he spoke.

"Of your son we will speak later," said Harley, strangely softened. "But before I say more of him, let me ask you to explain; let me hope that you can extenuate what —"

"You are right," interrupted Egerton, with eager quickness. "You would know from my own lips at last the plain tale of my own offence against you. It is due to both. Patiently hear me out."

Then Egerton told all,— his own love for Nora, his struggles against what he felt as treason to his friend, his sudden discovery of Nora's love for him; on that discovery, the overthrow of all his resolutions; their secret marriage, their separation; Nora's flight, to which Audley still assigned but her groundless vague suspicion that their nuptials had not been legal, and her impatience of his own delay in acknowledging the rite.

His listener interrupted him here with a few questions, the clear and prompt replies to which enabled Harley to detect Levy's plausible perversion of the facts; and he vaguely guessed the cause of the usurer's falsehood, in the criminal passion which the ill-fated bride had inspired.

"Egerton," said Harley, stifling with an effort his own wrath against the vile deceiver both of wife and husband, "if, on reading those papers, you find that Leonora had more excuse for her suspicions and flight than you now deem, and discover perfidy in one to whom you trusted your secret, leave his punishment to Heaven. All that you say convinces me more and more that we cannot even see through the cloud, much less guide the thunderbolt. But proceed."

Audley looked surprised and startled, and his eye turned

wistfully towards the papers; but after a short pause he continued his recital. He came to Nora's unexpected return to her father's house, her death, his conquest of his own grief, that he might spare Harley the abrupt shock of learning her decease. He had torn himself from the dead, in remorseful sympathy with the living. He spoke of Harley's illness, so nearly fatal, repeated Harley's jealous words, "that he would rather mourn Nora's death, than take comfort from the thought that she had loved another." He spoke of his journey to the village where Mr. Dale had told him Nora's child was placed — "and, hearing that child and mother were alike gone, whom now could I right by acknowledging a bond that I feared would so wring your heart?" Audley again paused a moment, and resumed in short, nervous, impressive sentences. This cold, austere man of the world for the first time bared his heart,—unconscious, perhaps, that he did so; unconscious that he revealed how deeply, amidst State cares and public distinctions, he had felt the absence of affections; how mechanical was that outer circle in the folds of life which is called a "career;" how valueless wealth had grown — none to inherit it. Of his gnawing and progressive disease alone he did not speak; he was too proud and too masculine to appeal to pity for physical ills. He reminded Harley how often, how eagerly, year after year, month after month, he had urged his friend to rouse himself from mournful dreams, devote his native powers to his country, or seek the surer felicity of domestic ties. "Selfish in these attempts I might be," said Egerton; "it was only if I saw you restored to happiness that I could believe you could calmly hear my explanation of the past, and on the floor of some happy home grant me your forgiveness. I longed to confess, and I dared not. Often have the words rushed to my lips,—as often some chance sentence from you repelled me. In a word, with you were so entwined all the thoughts and affections of my youth—even those that haunted the grave of Nora—that I could not bear to resign your friendship, and, surrounded by the esteem and honour of a world I cared not for, to meet the contempt of your reproachful eye."

Amidst all that Audley said, amidst all that admitted of no excuse, two predominant sentiments stood clear, in unmistakable and touching pathos, — remorseful regret for the lost Nora, and self-accusing, earnest, almost feminine tenderness for the friend he had deceived. Thus, as he continued to speak, Harley more and more forgot even the remembrance of his own guilty and terrible interval of hate; the gulf that had so darkly yawned between the two closed up, leaving them still standing side by side, as in their schoolboy days. But he remained silent, listening, shading his face from Audley, and as if under some soft but enthralling spell, till Egerton thus closed, —

“And now, Harley, all is told. You spoke of revenge?”

“Revenge!” muttered Harley, starting.

“And believe me,” continued Egerton, “were revenge in your power, I should rejoice at it as an atonement. To receive an injury in return for that which, first from youthful passion, and afterwards from the infirmity of purpose that concealed the wrong, I have inflicted upon you — why, that would soothe my conscience, and raise my lost self-esteem. The sole revenge you can bestow takes the form which most humiliates me, — to revenge is to pardon.”

Harley groaned; and still hiding his face with one hand, stretched forth the other, but rather with the air of one who entreats than who accords forgiveness. Audley took and pressed the hand thus extended.

“And now, Harley, farewell. With the dawn I leave this house. I cannot now accept your aid in this election. Levy shall announce my resignation. Randal Leslie, if you so please it, may be returned in my stead. He has abilities which, under safe guidance, may serve his country; and I have no right to reject from vain pride whatever will promote the career of one whom I undertook, and have failed, to serve.”

“Ay, ay,” muttered Harley; “think not of Randal Leslie; think but of your son.”

“My son! But are you sure that he still lives? You smile; you — you — oh, Harley, I took from you the mother

— give to me the son; break my heart with gratitude. Your revenge is found ! ”

Lord L'Estrange rose with a sudden start, gazed on Audley for a moment,—irresolute, not from resentment, but from shame. At that moment he was the man humbled; he was the man who feared reproach, and who needed pardon. Audley, not divining what was thus passing in Harley's breast, turned away.

“ You think that I ask too much; and yet all that I can give to the child of my love and the heir of my name is the worthless blessing of a ruined man. Harley, I say no more. I dare not add, ‘ You too loved his mother ! and with a deeper and a nobler love than mine. ’ ” He stopped short, and Harley flung himself on his breast.

“ Me — me — pardon me, Audley ! Your offence has been slight to mine. You have told me your offence; never can I name to you my own. Rejoice that we have both to exchange forgiveness, and in that exchange we are equal still, Audley, brothers still. Look up ! look up ! think that we are boys now as we were once,—boys who have had their wild quarrel, and who, the moment it is over, feel dearer to each other than before. ”

“ Oh, Harley, this *is* revenge ! It strikes home, ” murmured Egerton, and tears gushed fast from eyes that could have gazed unwinking on the rack. The clock struck; Harley sprang forward.

“ I have time yet, ” he cried. “ Much to do and to undo. You are saved from the grasp of Levy; your election will be won; your fortunes in much may be restored; you have before you honours not yet achieved; your career as yet is scarce begun; your son will embrace you to-morrow. Let me go—your hand again ! Ah, Audley, we shall be so happy yet ! ”

CHAPTER XXXI.

"THERE is a hitch," said Dick, pithily, when Randal joined him in the oak copse at ten o'clock. "Life is full of hitches."

RANDAL. — "The art of life is to smooth them away. What hitch is this, my dear Avenel?"

DICK. — "Leonard has taken huff at certain expressions of Lord L'Estrange's at the nomination to-day, and talks of retiring from the contest."

RANDAL (with secret glee). — "But his resignation would smooth a hitch,—not create one. The votes promised to him would thus be freed, and go to —"

DICK. — "The Right Honourable Red-Tapist!"

RANDAL. — "Are you serious?"

DICK. — "As an undertaker! The fact is, there are two parties among the Yellows as there are in the Church,—High Yellow and Low Yellow. Leonard has made great way with the High Yellows, and has more influence with them than I; and the High Yellows infinitely preferred Egerton to yourself. They say, 'Politics apart, he would be an honour to the borough.' Leonard is of the same opinion; and if he retires, I don't think I could coax either him or the Highflyers to make you any the better by his resignation."

RANDAL. — "But surely your nephew's sense of gratitude to you would induce him not to go against your wishes?"

DICK. — "Unluckily, the gratitude is all the other way. It is I who am under obligations to him,—not he to me. As for Lord L'Estrange, I can't make head or tail of his real intentions; and why he should have attacked Leonard in that way puzzles me more than all, for he wished Leonard to stand; and Levy has privately informed me that, in spite of my Lord's friendship for the Right Honourable, you are the man he desires to secure."

RANDAL. — He has certainly shown that desire through out the whole canvass."

DICK. — "I suspect that the borough-mongers have got a seat for Egerton elsewhere; or, perhaps, should his party come in again, he is to be pitchforked into the Upper House."

RANDAL (smiling). — "Ah, Avenel, you are so shrewd; you see through everything. I will also add that Egerton wants some short respite from public life, in order to nurse his health and attend to his affairs, otherwise I could not even contemplate the chance of the electors preferring me to him, without a pang."

DICK. — "Pang! stuff — considerable. The oak-trees don't hear us! You want to come into parliament, and no mistake. If I am the man to retire, — as I always proposed, and had got Leonard to agree to, before this confounded speech of L'Estrange's, — come into parliament you will, for the Low Yellows I can twist round my finger, provided the High Yellows will not interfere; in short, I could transfer to you votes promised to me, but I can't answer for those promised to Leonard. Levy tells me you are to marry a rich girl, and will have lots of money; so, of course, you will pay my expenses if you come in through my votes."

RANDAL. — "My dear Avenel, certainly I will."

DICK. — "And I have two private bills I want to smuggle through parliament."

RANDAL. — "They shall be smuggled, rely on it. Mr. Fairfield being on one side of the House, and I on the other, we two could prevent all unpleasant opposition. Private bills are easily managed, — with that tact which I flatter myself I possess."

DICK. — "And when the bills are through the House, and you have had time to look about you, I dare say you will see that no man can go against Public Opinion, unless he wants to knock his own head against a stone wall; and that Public Opinion is decidedly Yellow."

RANDAL (with candour). — "I cannot deny that Public Opinion is Yellow; and at my age, it is natural that I should not commit myself to the policy of a former generation. Blue

is fast wearing out. But, to return to Mr. Fairfield: you do not speak as if you had no hope of keeping him straight to what I understand to be his agreement with yourself. Surely his honour is engaged to it?"

DICK. — "I don't know as to honour; but he has now taken a fancy to public life,—at least so he said no later than this morning before we went into the hall; and I trust that matters will come right. Indeed, I left him with Parson Dale, who promised me that he would use all his best exertions to reconcile Leonard and my Lord, and that Leonard should do nothing hastily."

RANDAL. — "But why should Mr. Fairfield retire because Lord L'Estrange wounds his feelings? I am sure Mr. Fairfield has wounded mine, but that does not make me think of retiring."

DICK. — "Oh, Leonard is a poet, and poets are quite as crotchety as L'Estrange said they were. And Leonard is under obligations to Lord L'Estrange, and thought that Lord L'Estrange was pleased by his standing; whereas, now — In short, it is all Greek to me, except that Leonard has mounted his high horse, and if that throws him, I am afraid it will throw you. But still I have great confidence in Parson Dale,—a good fellow who has much influence with Leonard. And though I thought it right to be above-board, and let you know where the danger lies, yet one thing I can promise,—if I resign, you shall come in; so shake hands on it."

RANDAL. — "My dear Avenel! And your wish is to resign?"

DICK. — "Certainly. I should do so a little time after noon, contriving to be below Leonard on the poll. You know Emanuel Trout, the captain of the Hundred and Fifty 'Waiters on Providence,' as they are called?"

RANDAL. — "To be sure I do."

DICK. — "When Emanuel Trout comes into the booth, you will know how the election turns. As he votes, all the Hundred and Fifty will vote. Now I must go back. Good-night. You'll not forget that my expenses are to be paid. Point of honour. Still, if they are *not* paid, the election can be up-

set,—petition for bribery and corruption; and if they *are* paid, why, Lansmere may be your seat for life.”

RANDAL. — “Your expenses shall be paid the moment my marriage gives me the means to pay them,—and that must be very soon.”

DICK. — “So Levy says. And my little jobs — the private bills?”

RANDAL. — “Consider the bills passed and the jobs done.”

DICK. — “And one must not forget one’s country. One must do the best one can for one’s principles. Egerton is infernally Blue. You allow Public Opinion — is —”

RANDAL. — “Yellow. Not a doubt of it.”

DICK. — “Good-night. Ha, ha! humbug, eh?”

RANDAL. — “Humbug! Between men like us,—oh, no. Good-night, my dear friend, I rely on you.”

DICK. — “Yes; but mind, I promise nothing if Leonard Fairfield does not stand.”

RANDAL. — “He must stand; keep him to it. Your affairs, your business, your mill —”

DICK. — “Very true. He *must* stand. I have great faith in Parson Dale.”

Randal glided back through the park. When he came on the terrace, he suddenly encountered Lord L’Estrange. “I have just been privately into the town, my dear Lord, and heard a strange rumour, that Mr. Fairfield was so annoyed by some remarks in your Lordship’s admirable speech, that he talks of retiring from the contest. That would give a new feature to the election, and perplex all our calculations; and I fear, in that case, there might be some secret coalition between Avenel’s friends and our Committee, whom, I am told, I displeased by the moderate speech which your Lordship so eloquently defended,—a coalition by which Avenel would come in with Mr. Egerton; whereas, if we all four stand, Mr. Egerton, I presume, will be quite safe, — and I certainly think I have an excellent chance.”

LORD L’ESTRANGE. — “So Mr. Fairfield would retire in consequence of my remarks! I am going into the town, and I intend to apologize for those remarks, and retract them.”

RANDAL (joyously). — "Noble!"

Lord L'Estrange looked at Leslie's face, upon which the stars gleamed palely. "Mr. Egerton has thought more of your success than of his own," said he, gravely, and hurried on.

Randal continued on the terrace. Perhaps Harley's last words gave him a twinge of compunction. His head sunk musingly on his breast, and he paced to and fro the long gravel-walk, summoning up all his intellect to resist every temptation to what could injure his self-interest.

"Skulking knave!" muttered Harley. "At least there will be nothing to repent, if I can do justice on him. That is not revenge. Come, that must be a fair retribution. Besides, how else can I deliver Violante?"

He laughed gayly, his heart was so light; and his foot bounded on as fleet as the deer that he startled amongst the fern.

A few yards from the turnstile he overtook Richard Avenel, disguised in a rough great-coat and spectacles. Nevertheless, Harley's eye detected the Yellow candidate at the first glance. He caught Dick familiarly by the arm. "Well met! I was going to you. We have the election to settle."

"On the terms I mentioned to your Lordship?" said Dick, startled. "I will agree to return one of your candidates; but it must not be Audley Egerton." Harley whispered close in Avenel's ear.

Avenel uttered an exclamation of amazement. The two gentlemen walked on rapidly, and conversing with great eagerness.

"Certainly," said Avenel, at length, stopping short, "one would do a great deal to serve a family connection,—and a connection that does a man so much credit; and how can one go against one's own brother-in-law,—a gentleman of such high standing, pull up the whole family! How pleased Mrs. Richard Avenel will be! Why the devil did not I know it before? And poor—dear—dear Nora. Ah, that she were living!" Dick's voice trembled.

"Her name will be righted; and I will explain why it was

my fault that Egerton did not before acknowledge his marriage, and claim you as a brother. Come, then, it is all fixed and settled."

"No, my Lord; I am pledged the other way. I don't see how I can get off my word—to Randal Leslie. I'm not over nice, nor what is called Quixotic; but still my word is given that if I retire from the election, I will do my best to return Leslie instead of Egerton."

"I know that through Baron Levy. But if your nephew retires?"

"Oh, that would solve all difficulties. But the poor boy has now a wish to come into parliament; and he has done me a service in the hour of need."

"Leave it to me. And as to Randal Leslie, he shall have an occasion himself to acquit you and redeem himself; and happy, indeed, will it be for him if he has yet one spark of gratitude, or one particle of honour!"

The two continued to converse for a few moments, Dick seeming to forget the election itself, and ask questions of more interest to his heart, which Harley answered so, that Dick wrung L'Estrange's hand with great emotion, and muttered, "My poor mother! I understand now why she would never talk to me of Nora. When may I tell her the truth?"

"To-morrow evening, after the election, Egerton shall embrace you all."

Dick started, and saying, "See Leonard as soon as you can, —there is no time to lose," plunged into a lane that led towards the obscurer recesses of the town. Harley continued his way with the same light elastic tread which (lost during his abnegation of his own nature) was now restored to the foot, that seemed loath to leave a print upon the mire.

At the commencement of the High Street he encountered Mr. Dale and Fairfield, walking slowly, arm-in-arm.

HARLEY. — "Leonard, I was coming to you. Give me your hand. Forget for the present the words that justly stung and offended you. I will do more than apologize,—I will repair the wrong. Excuse me, Mr. Dale, I have one word to say in private to Leonard." He drew Fairfield aside.

"Avenel tells me that if you were to retire from this contest, it would be a sacrifice of inclination. Is it so?"

"My Lord, I have sorrows that I would fain forget; and though I at first shrunk from the strife in which I have been since engaged, yet now a literary career seems to me to have lost its old charm; and I find that, in public life, there is a distraction to the thoughts which embitter solitude, that books fail to bestow. Therefore, if you still wish me to continue this contest, though I know not your motive, it will not be as it was to begin it,—a reluctant and a painful obedience to your request."

"I understand. It was a sacrifice of inclination to begin the contest; it would be now a sacrifice of inclination to withdraw?"

"Honestly, yes, my Lord."

"I rejoice to hear it, for I ask that sacrifice,—a sacrifice which you will recall hereafter with delight and pride; a sacrifice sweeter, if I read your nature aright—oh, sweeter far, than all which commonplace ambition could bestow! And when you learn why I make this demand, you will say, 'This, indeed, is reparation for the words that wounded my affections, and wronged my heart.'"

"My Lord, my Lord!" exclaimed Leonard, "the injury is repaired already. You give me back your esteem, when you so well anticipate my answer. Your esteem!—life smiles again. I can return to my more legitimate career without a sigh. I have no need of distraction from thought now. You will believe that, whatever my past presumption, I can pray sincerely for your happiness."

"Poet, you adorn your career; you fulfil your mission, even at this moment; you beautify the world; you give to the harsh form of Duty the cestus of the Graces," said Harley, trying to force a smile to his quivering lips. "But we must hasten back to the prose of existence. I accept your sacrifice. As for the time and mode I must select in order to insure its result, I will ask you to abide by such instructions as I shall have occasion to convey through your uncle. Till then, no word of your intentions,—not even to Mr. Dale. Forgive me

if I would rather secure Mr. Egerton's election than yours. Let that explanation suffice for the present. What think you, by the way, of Audley Egerton?"

"I thought when I heard him speak and when he closed with those touching words,—implying that he left all of his life not devoted to his country 'to the charity of his friends,'—how proudly, even as his opponent, I could have clasped his hand; and if he had wronged me in private life, I should have thought it ingratitude to the country he had so served to remember the offence."

Harley turned away abruptly, and joined Mr. Dale.

"Leave Leonard to go home by himself; you see that I have healed whatever wounds I inflicted on him."

PARSON. — "And, your better nature thus awakened, I trust, my dear Lord, that you have altogether abandoned the idea of —"

HARLEY. — "Revenge? — no. And if you do not approve that revenge to-morrow, I will never rest till I have seen you — a bishop!"

MR. DALE (much shocked). — "My Lord, for shame!"

HARLEY (seriously). — "My levity is but lip-deep, my dear Mr. Dale. But sometimes the froth on the wave shows the change in the tide."

The parson looked at him earnestly, and then seized him by both hands with holy gladness and affection.

"Return to the Park now," said Harley, smiling; "and tell Violante, if it be not too late to see her, that she was even more eloquent than you."

Lord L'Estrange bounded forward.

Mr. Dale walked back through the park to Lansmere House. On the terrace he found Randal, who was still pacing to and fro, sometimes in the starlight, sometimes in the shadow.

Leslie looked up, and seeing Mr. Dale, the close astuteness of his aspect returned; and stepping out of the starlight deep into the shadow, he said,—

"I was sorry to learn that Mr. Fairfield had been so hurt by Lord L'Estrange's severe allusions. Pity that political

differences should interfere with private friendships; but I hear that you have been to Mr. Fairfield, — and, doubtless, as the peacemaker. Perhaps you met Lord L'Estrange by the way? He promised me that he would apologize and retract."

"Good young man!" said the unsuspecting parson, "he has done so."

"And Mr. Leonard Fairfield will, therefore, I presume, continue the contest?"

"Contest — ah, this election! I suppose so, of course. But I grieve that he should stand against you, who seem to be disposed towards him so kindly."

"Oh," said Randal, with a benevolent smile, "we have fought before, you know, and I beat him then. I may do so again!"

And he walked into the house, arm-in-arm with the parson. Mr. Dale sought Violante; Leslie retired to his own room, and felt his election was secured.

Lord L'Estrange had gained the thick of the streets — passing groups of roaring enthusiasts — Blue and Yellow — now met with a cheer, now followed by a groan. Just by a public-house that formed the angle of a lane with the High Street, and which was all ablaze with light and all alive with clamour, he beheld the graceful baron leaning against the threshold, smoking his cigar, too refined to associate its divine vapour with the wreaths of shag within, and chatting agreeably with a knot of females, who were either attracted by the general excitement, or waiting to see husband, brother, father, or son, who were now joining in the chorus of "Blue forever!" that rang from tap-room to attic of the illumined hostelry. Levy, seeing Lord L'Estrange, withdrew his cigar from his lips, and hastened to join him. "All the Hundred and Fifty are in there," said the baron, with a backward significant jerk of his thumb towards the inn. "I have seen them all privately, in tens at a time; and I have been telling the ladies without that it will be best for the interest of their families to go home, and let us lock up the Hundred and Fifty safe from the Yellows, till we bring them to the poll. But I am afraid," continued Levy, "that the rascals are not

to be relied upon unless I actually pay them beforehand; and that would be disreputable, immoral,—and, what is more, it would upset the election. Besides, if they are paid beforehand, query, is it quite sure how they will vote afterwards?”

“Mr. Avenel, I dare say, can manage them,” said Harley. “Pray do nothing immoral, and nothing that will upset the election. I think you might as well go home.”

“Home! No, pardon me, my Lord; there must be some head to direct the Committee, and keep our captains at their posts upon the doubtful electors. A great deal of mischief may be done between this and the morrow; and I would sit up all night—ay, six nights a week for the next three months—to prevent any awkward mistake by which Audley Egerton can be returned.”

“His return would really grieve you so much?” said Harley.

“You may judge of that by the zeal with which I enter into all your designs.”

Here there was a sudden and wondrously loud shout from another inn,—a Yellow inn, far down the lane, not so luminous as the Blue hostelry; on the contrary, looking rather dark and sinister, more like a place for conspirators or felons than honest, independent electors,—“Avenel forever! Avenel and the Yellows!”

“Excuse me, my Lord, I must go back and watch over my black sheep, if I would have them blue!” said Levy; and he retreated towards the threshold. But at that shout of “Avenel forever!” as if at a signal, various electors of the redoubted Hundred and Fifty rushed from the Blue hostelry, sweeping past Levy, and hurrying down the lane to the dark little Yellow inn, followed by the female stragglers, as small birds follow an owl. It was not, however, very easy to get into that Yellow inn; Yellow Reformers, eminent for their zeal on behalf of purity of election, were stationed outside the door, and only strained in one candidate for admittance at a time. “After all,” thought the baron, as he passed into the principal room of the Blue tavern, and proposed the national song of “Rule Britannia,”—“after all, Avenel hates

Egerton as much as I do, and both sides work to the same end." And thrumming on the table, he joined with a fine bass in the famous line,—

"For Britons never will be slaves!"

In the interim, Harley had disappeared within the Lansmere Arms, which was the headquarters of the Blue Committee. Not, however, mounting to the room in which a few of the more indefatigable were continuing their labours, receiving reports from scouts, giving orders, laying wagers, and very muzzy with British principles and spirits, Harley called aside the landlord, and inquired if the stranger, for whom rooms had been prepared, was yet arrived. An affirmative answer was given, and Harley followed the host up a private stair, to a part of the house remote from the rooms devoted to the purposes of the election. He remained with this stranger about half an hour, and then walked into the Committee-room, got rid of the more excited, conferred with the more sober, issued a few brief directions to such of the leaders as he felt he could most rely upon, and returned home as rapidly as he had quitted it.

Dawn was gray in the skies when Harley sought his own chamber. To gain it, he passed by the door of Violante's. His heart suffused with grateful ineffable tenderness, he paused and kissed the threshold. When he stood within his room (the same that he had occupied in his early youth), he felt as if the load of years were lifted from his bosom. The joyous, divine elasticity of spirit, that in the morning of life springs towards the Future as a bird soars into heaven, pervaded his whole sense of being. A Greek poet implies that the height of bliss is the sudden relief of pain: there is a nobler bliss still,—the rapture of the conscience at the sudden release from a guilty thought. By the bedside at which he had knelt in boyhood, Harley paused to kneel once more. The luxury of prayer, interrupted since he had nourished schemes of which his passions had blinded him to the sin, but which, nevertheless, he dared not confess to the All-Merciful, was restored to him. And yet, as he bowed his

knee, the elation of spirits he had before felt forsook him. The sense of the danger his soul had escaped, the full knowledge of the guilt to which the fiend had tempted, came dread before his clearing vision; he shuddered in horror of himself. And he who but a few hours before had deemed it so impossible to pardon his fellow-man, now felt as if years of useful and beneficent deeds could alone purify his own repentant soul from the memory of one hateful passion.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BUT while Harley had thus occupied the hours of night with cares for the living, Audley Egerton had been in commune with the dead. He had taken from the pile of papers amidst which it had fallen, the record of Nora's silenced heart. With a sad wonder he saw how he had once been loved. What had all which successful ambition had bestowed on the lonely statesman to compensate for the glorious empire he had lost, — such realms of lovely fancy; such worlds of exquisite emotion; that infinite which lies within the divine sphere that unites spiritual genius with human love? His own positive and earthly nature attained, for the first time, and as if for its own punishment, the comprehension of that loftier and more ethereal visitant from the heavens, who had once looked with a seraph's smile through the prison-bars of his iron life; that celestial refinement of affection, that exuberance of feeling which warms into such varieties of beautiful idea, under the breath of the earth-beautifier, Imagination, — all from which, when it was all his own, he had turned half weary and impatient, and termed the exaggerations of a visionary romance, now that the world had lost them evermore, he interpreted aright as truths. Truths they were, although illusions. Even as the philosopher tells us that the splendour of colours which deck the universe is not on the

surface whereon we think to behold it, but in our own vision; yet, take the colours from the universe, and what philosophy can assure us that the universe has sustained no loss?

But when Audley came to that passage in the fragment which, though but imperfectly, explained the true cause of Nora's flight; when he saw how Levy, for what purpose he was unable to conjecture, had suggested to his bride the doubts that had offended him,—asserted the marriage to be a fraud, drawn from Audley's own brief resentful letters to Nora proof of the assertion, misled so naturally the young wife's scanty experience of actual life, and maddened one so sensitively pure into the conviction of dishonour,—his brow darkened, and his hand clenched. He rose and went at once to Levy's room. He found it deserted, inquired, learned that Levy was gone forth, and had left word he might not be at home for the night. Fortunate, perhaps, for Audley, fortunate for the baron, that they did not then meet. Revenge, in spite of his friend's admonition, might at that hour have been as potent an influence on Egerton as it had been on Harley, and not, as with the latter, to be turned aside.

Audley came back to his room and finished the tragic record. He traced the tremor of that beloved hand through the last tortures of doubt and despair; he saw where the hot tears had fallen; he saw where the hand had paused, the very sentence not concluded; mentally he accompanied his fated bride in the dismal journey to her maiden home, and beheld her before him as he had last seen, more beautiful even in death than the face of living woman had ever since appeared to him; and as he bent over the last words, the blank that they left on the leaf, stretching pale beyond the quiver of the characters and the blister of the tears,—pale and blank as the void which departed love leaves behind it,—he felt his heart suddenly stand still, its course arrested as the record closed. It beat again, but feebly,—so feebly! His breath became labour and pain, his sight grew dizzy; but the constitutional firmness and fortitude of the man clung to him in the stubborn mechanism of habit, his will yet fought against

his disease, life rallied as the light flickers up in the waning taper.

The next morning, when Harley came into his friend's room, Egerton was asleep. But the sleep seemed much disturbed; the breathing was hard and difficult; the bed-clothes were partially thrown off, as if in the tossing of disturbed dreams; the sinewy strong arm, the broad athletic breast, were partly bare. Strange that so deadly a disease within should leave the frame such apparent power that, to the ordinary eye, the sleeping sufferer seemed a model of healthful vigour. One hand was thrust with uneasy straining over the pillows,—it had its hold on the fatal papers; a portion of the leaves was visible; and where the characters had been blurred by Nora's tears, were the traces, yet moist, of tears perhaps more bitter.

Harley felt deeply affected; and while he still stood by the bed, Egerton sighed heavily and woke. He stared round him, as if perplexed and confused, till his eyes resting on Harley, he smiled and said,—

"So early! Ah, I remember, it is the day for our great boat-race. We shall have the current against us; but you and I together — when did we ever lose?"

Audley's mind was wandering; it had gone back to the old Eton days. But Harley thought that he spoke in metaphorical allusion to the present more important contest.

"True, my Audley, — you and I together — when did we ever lose? But will you rise? I wish you would be at the polling-place to shake hands with your voters as they come up. By four o'clock you will be released, and the election won."

"The election! How! what!" said Egerton, recovering himself. "I recollect now. Yes,—I accept this last kindness from you. I always said I would die in harness. Public life—I have no other. Ah, I dream again! Oh, Harley! my son, my son!"

"You shall see him after four o'clock. You will be proud of each other. But make haste and dress. Shall I ring the bell for your servant?"

"Do," said Egerton, briefly, and sinking back. Harley

quitted the room, and joined Randal and some of the more important members of the Blue Committee, who were already hurrying over their breakfast.

All were anxious and nervous except Harley, who dipped his dry toast into his coffee, according to his ordinary abstemious Italian habit, with serene composure. Randal in vain tried for an equal tranquillity. But though sure of his election, there would necessarily follow a scene trying to the nerve of his hypocrisy. He would have to affect profound chagrin in the midst of vile joy; have to act the part of decorous high-minded sorrow, that by some untoward chance, some unaccountable cross-splitting, Randal Leslie's gain should be Audley Egerton's loss. Besides, he was flurried in the expectation of seeing the squire, and of appropriating the money which was to secure the dearest object of his ambition. Breakfast was soon despatched. The Committee-men, bustling for their hats, and looking at their watches, gave the signal for departure; yet no Squire Hazeldean had made his appearance. Harley, stepping from the window upon the terrace, beckoned to Randal, who took his hat and followed.

"Mr. Leslie," said Harley, leaning against the balustrade, and carelessly patting Nero's rough, honest head, "you remember that you were good enough to volunteer to me the explanation of certain circumstances in connection with the Count di Peschiera, which you gave to the Duke di Serrano; and I replied that my thoughts were at present engaged on the election, but as soon as that was over, I should be very willing to listen to any communications affecting yourself and my old friend the duke, with which you might be pleased to favour me."

This address took Randal by surprise, and did not tend to calm his nerves. However, he replied readily,—

"Upon that, as upon any other matter that may influence the judgment you form of me, I shall be but too eager to remove a single doubt that, in your eyes, can rest upon my honour."

"You speak exceedingly well, Mr. Leslie; no man can express himself more handsomely; and I will claim your promise

with the less scruple because the duke is powerfully affected by the reluctance of his daughter to ratify the engagement that binds his honour, in case your own is indisputably cleared. I may boast of some influence over the young lady, since I assisted to save her from the infamous plot of Peschiera; and the duke urges me to receive your explanation, in the belief that, if it satisfy me, as it has satisfied him, I may conciliate his child in favour of the addresses of a suitor who would have hazarded his very life against so redoubted a duellist as Peschiera."

"Lord L'Estrange," replied Randal, bowing, "I shall indeed owe you much if you can remove that reluctance on the part of my betrothed bride, which alone clouds my happiness, and which would at once put an end to my suit, did I not ascribe it to an imperfect knowledge of myself, which I shall devote my life to improve into confidence and affection."

"No man *can* speak more handsomely," reiterated Harley, as if with profound admiration; and indeed he did eye Randal as we eye some rare curiosity. "I am happy to inform you, too," continued L'Estrange, "that if your marriage with the Duke of Serrano's daughter take place —"

"*If!*" echoed Randal.

"I beg pardon for making an hypothesis of what you claim the right to esteem a certainty, — I correct my expression: *when* your marriage with that young lady takes place, you will at least escape the rock on which many young men of ardent affections have split at the onset of the grand voyage. You will form no imprudent connection. In a word, I received yesterday a despatch from Vienna, which contains the full pardon and formal restoration of Alphonso, Duke di Serrano. And I may add, that the Austrian government (sometimes misunderstood in this country) is bound by the laws it administers, and can in no way dictate to the duke, once restored, as to the choice of his son-in-law, or as to the heritage that may devolve on his child."

"And does the duke yet know of his recall?" exclaimed Randal, his cheeks flushed and his eyes sparkling.

"No. I reserve that good news, with other matters, till

after the election is over. But Egerton keeps us waiting sadly. Ah, here comes his valet."

Audley's servant approached. "Mr. Egerton feels himself rather more poorly than usual, my Lord; he begs you will excuse his going with you into the town at present. He will come later if his presence is absolutely necessary."

"No. Pray tell him to rest and nurse himself. I should have liked him to witness his own triumph,—that is all. Say I will represent him at the polling-place. Gentlemen, are you ready? We will go on."

The polling booth was erected in the centre of the market-place. The voting had already commenced; and Mr. Avenel and Leonard were already at their posts, in order to salute and thank the voters in their cause who passed before them. Randal and L'Estrange entered the booth amidst loud hurrahs, and to the national air of "See the Conquering Hero comes." The voters defiled in quick succession. Those who voted entirely according to principle or colour — which came to much the same thing — and were therefore above what is termed "management," flocked in first, voting straight-forwardly for both Blues or both Yellows. At the end of the first half-hour the Yellows were about ten ahead of the Blues. Then sundry split votes began to perplex conjecture as to the result; and Randal, at the end of the first hour, had fifteen majority over Audley Egerton, two over Dick Avenel, Leonard Fairfield heading the poll by five. Randal owed his place in the lists to the voters that Harley's personal efforts had procured for him; and he was well pleased to see that Lord L'Estrange had not withdrawn from him a single promise so obtained. This augured well for Harley's ready belief in his appointed "explanations." In short, the whole election seemed going just as he had calculated. But by twelve o'clock there were some changes in the relative position of the candidates. Dick Avenel had gradually gained ground,—passing Randal, passing even Leonard. He stood at the head of the poll by a majority of ten. Randal came next. Audley was twenty behind Randal, and Leonard four behind Audley.

More than half the constituency had polled, but none of the

Committee on either side, nor one of the redoubted corps of a Hundred and Fifty.

The poll now slackened sensibly. Randal, looking round, and longing for an opportunity to ask Dick whether he really meant to return himself instead of his nephew, saw that Harley had disappeared; and presently a note was brought to him requesting his presence in the Committee-room. Thither he hastened.

As he forced his way through the bystanders in the lobby, towards the threshold of the room, Levy caught hold of him and whispered, "They begin to fear for Egerton. They want a compromise in order to secure him. They will propose to you to resign, if Avenel will withdraw Leonard. Don't be entrapped. L'Estrange may put the question to you; but — a word in your ear — he would be glad enough to throw over Egerton. Rely upon this, and stand firm."

Randal made no answer, but, the crowd giving way for him, entered the room. Levy followed. The doors were instantly closed. All the Blue Committee were assembled. They looked heated, anxious, eager. Lord L'Estrange, alone calm and cool, stood at the head of the long table. Despite his composure, Harley's brow was thoughtful. "Yes," said he to himself, "I will give this young man the fair occasion to prove gratitude to his benefactor; and if he here acquit himself, I will spare him, at least, public exposure of his deceit to others. So young, he must have some good in him, — at least towards the man to whom he owes all."

"Mr. Leslie," said L'Estrange, aloud, "you see the state of the poll. Our Committee believe that, if you continue to stand, Egerton must be beaten. They fear that, Leonard Fairfield having little chance, the Yellows will not waste their second votes on him, but will transfer them to you, in order to keep out Egerton. If you retire, Egerton will be safe. There is reason to suppose that Leonard would, in that case, also be withdrawn."

"You can hope and fear nothing more from Egerton," whispered Levy. "He is utterly ruined; and, if he lose, will sleep in a prison. The bailiffs are waiting for him."

Randal was still silent, and at that silence an indignant murmur ran through the more influential members of the Committee. For, though Audley was not personally very popular, still a candidate so eminent was necessarily their first object, and they would seem very small to the Yellows, if their great man was defeated by the very candidate introduced to aid him,—a youth unknown. Vanity and patriotism both swelled that murmur. “You see, young sir,” cried a rich, blunt master-butcher, “that it was an honourable understanding that Mr. Egerton was to be safe. You had no claim on us, except as fighting second to him. And we are all astonished that you don’t say at once, ‘Save Egerton, of course.’ Excuse my freedom, sir. No time for palaver.”

“Lord L’Estrange,” said Randal, turning mildly from the butcher, “do you, as the first here in rank and influence, and as Mr. Egerton’s especial friend, call upon me to sacrifice my election, and what appear to be the inclinations of the majority of the constituents, in order to obtain what is, after all, a doubtful chance of returning Mr. Egerton in my room?”

“I do not call upon you, Mr. Leslie. It is a matter of feeling or of honour, which a gentleman can very well decide for himself.”

“Was any such compact made between your Lordship and myself, when you first gave me your interest and canvassed for me in person?”

“Certainly not. Gentlemen, be silent. No such compact was mentioned by me.”

“Neither was it by Mr. Egerton. Whatever might be the understanding spoken of by the respected elector who addressed me, I was no party to it. I am persuaded that Mr. Egerton is the last person who would wish to owe his election to a trick upon the electors in the midst of the polling, and to what the world would consider a very unhandsome treatment of myself, upon whom all the toil of the canvass has devolved.”

Again the murmur rose; but Randal had an air so determined, that it quelled resentment, and obtained a continued, though most chilling and half-contemptuous hearing.

"Nevertheless," resumed Randal, "I would at once retire were I not under the firm persuasion that I shall convince all present, who now seem to condemn me, that I act precisely according to Mr. Egerton's own private inclinations. That gentleman, in fact, has never been amongst you, has not canvassed in person, has taken no trouble, beyond a speech, that was evidently meant to be but a general defence of his past political career. What does this mean? Simply that his standing has been merely a form, to comply with the wish of his party, against his own desire."

The Committee-men looked at each other amazed and doubtful. Randal saw he had gained an advantage; he pursued it with a tact and ability which showed that, in spite of his mere oratorical deficiencies, he had in him the elements of a dexterous debater. "I will be plain with you, gentlemen. My character, my desire to stand well with you all, oblige me to be so. Mr. Egerton does not wish to come into parliament at present. His health is much broken; his private affairs need all his time and attention. I am, I may say, as a son to him. He is most anxious for my success; Lord L'Estrange told me but last night, very truly, 'more anxious for my success than his own.' Nothing could please him more than to think I were serving in parliament, however humbly, those great interests which neither health nor leisure will, in this momentous crisis, allow himself to defend with his wonted energy. Later, indeed, no doubt, he will seek to return to an arena in which he is so distinguished; and when the popular excitement, which produces the popular injustice of the day, is over, what constituency will not be proud to return such a man? In support and proof of what I have thus said, I now appeal to Mr. Egerton's own agent,—a gentleman who, in spite of his vast fortune and the rank he holds in society, has consented to act gratuitously on behalf of that great statesman. I ask you, then, respectfully, Baron Levy, Is not Mr. Egerton's health much broken, and in need of rest?"

"It is," said Levy.

"And do not his affairs necessitate his serious and undivided attention?"

"They do indeed," quoth the baron. "Gentlemen, I have nothing to urge in behalf of my distinguished friend as against the statement of his adopted son, Mr. Leslie."

"Then all I can say," cried the butcher, striking his huge fist on the table, "is, that Mr. Egerton has behaved d—d unhandsome to us, and we shall be the laughing-stock of the borough."

"Softly, softly," said Harley. "There is a knock at the door behind. Excuse me."

Harley quitted the room, but only for a minute or two. On his return he addressed himself to Randal.

"Are we then to understand, Mr. Leslie, that your intention is not to resign?"

"Unless your Lordship actually urge me to the contrary, I should say, Let the election go on, and all take our chance. That seems to me the fair, manly, ENGLISH [great emphasis on the last adjective], honourable course."

"Be it so," replied Harley; "'let all take their chance.' Mr. Leslie, we will no longer detain you. Go back to the polling-place,—one of the candidates should be present; and you, Baron Levy, be good enough to go also, and return thanks to those who may yet vote for Mr. Egerton."

Levy bowed, and went out arm-in-arm with Randal.

"Capital, capital," said the baron. "You have a wonderful head."

"I did not like L'Estrange's look, nevertheless. But he can't hurt me now; the votes he got for me instead of for Egerton have already polled. The Committee, indeed, may refuse to vote for me; but then there is Avenel's body of reserve. Yes, the election is virtually over. When we get back, Hazeldean will have arrived with the money for the purchase of my ancestral property; Dr. Riccabocca is already restored to the estates and titles of Serrano; what do I care further for Lord L'Estrange? Still, I do not like his look."

"Pooh, you have done just what he wished. I am forbidden to say more. Here we are at the booth. A new placard since we left. How are the numbers? Avenel forty ahead of

you; you thirty above Egerton; and Leonard Fairfield still last on the poll. But where are Avenel and Fairfield?"

Both those candidates had disappeared, perhaps gone to their own Committee-room.

Meanwhile, as soon as the doors had closed on Randal and the baron, in the midst of the angry hubbub succeeding to their departure, Lord L'Estrange sprang upon the table. The action and his look stilled every sound.

"Gentlemen, it is in our hands to return one of our candidates, and to make our own choice between the two. You have heard Mr. Leslie and Baron Levy. To their statement I make but this reply,— Mr. Egerton is needed by the country; and whatever his health or his affairs, he is ready to respond to that call. If he has not canvassed, if he does not appear before you at this moment, the services of more than twenty years plead for him in his stead. Which, then, of the two candidates do you choose as your member.— a renowned statesman, or a beardless boy? Both have ambition and ability; the one has identified those qualities with the history of a country, and (as it is now alleged to his prejudice) with a devotion that has broken a vigorous frame and injured a princely fortune. The other evinces his ambition by inviting you to prefer him to his benefactor, and proves his ability by the excuses he makes for ingratitude. Choose between the two,— an Egerton or a Leslie."

"Egerton forever!" cried all the assembly, as with a single voice, followed by a hiss for Leslie.

"But," said a grave and prudent Committee-man, "have we really the choice? Does not that rest with the Yellows? Is not your Lordship too sanguine?"

"Open that door behind; a deputation from our opponents waits in the room on the other side the passage. Admit them."

The Committee were hushed in breathless silence while Harley's order was obeyed. And soon, to their great surprise, Leonard Fairfield himself, attended by six of the principal members of the Yellow party, entered the room.

LORD L'ESTRANGE. — "You have a proposition to make to us, Mr. Fairfield, on behalf of yourself and Mr. Avenel, and with the approval of your Committee?"

LEONARD (advancing to the table). — "I have. We are convinced that neither party can carry both its candidates. Mr. Avenel is safe. The only question is, which of the two candidates on your side it best becomes the honour of this constituency to select. My resignation, which I am about to tender, will free sufficient votes to give the triumph either to Mr. Egerton or to Mr. Leslie."

"Egerton forever!" cried once more the excited Blues.

"Yes, Egerton forever!" said Leonard, with a glow upon his cheek. "We may differ from his politics, but who can tell us those of Mr. Leslie? We may differ from the politician, but who would not feel proud of the senator? A great and incalculable advantage is bestowed on that constituency which returns to parliament a distinguished man. His distinction ennobles the place he represents, it sustains public spirit, it augments the manly interest in all that affects the nation. Every time his voice hushes the assembled parliament, it reminds us of our common country; and even the discussion amongst his constituents which his voice provokes, clears their perceptions of the public interest, and enlightens themselves, from the intellect which commands their interests, and compels their attention. Egerton, then, forever! If our party must subscribe to the return of one opponent, let all unite to select the worthiest. My Lord L'Estrange, when I quit this room, it will be to announce my resignation, and to solicit those who have promised me their votes to transfer them to Mr. Audley Egerton."

Amidst the uproarious huzzas which followed this speech, Leonard drew near to Harley. "My Lord, I have obeyed your wishes, as conveyed to me by my uncle, who is engaged at this moment elsewhere in carrying them into effect."

"Leonard," said Harley, in the same undertone, "you have insured to Audley Egerton what you alone could do,—the triumph over a perfidious dependent, the continuance of the

sole career in which he has hitherto found the solace or the zest of life. He must thank you with his own lips. Come to the Park after the close of the poll. There and then shall the explanations yet needful to both be given and received."

Here Harley bowed to the assembly and raised his voice: "Gentlemen, yesterday, at the nomination of the candidates, I uttered remarks that have justly pained Mr. Fairfield. In your presence I wholly retract and frankly apologize for them. In your presence I entreat his forgiveness, and say, that if he will accord me his friendship, I will place him in my esteem and affection side by side with the statesman whom he has given to his country."

Leonard grasped the hand extended to him with both his own, and then, overcome by his emotions, hurried from the room; while Blues and Yellows exchanged greetings, rejoiced in the compromise that would dispel all party irritation, secure the peace of the borough, and allow quiet men, who had detested each other the day before, and vowed reciprocal injuries to trade and custom, the indulgence of all amiable and fraternal feelings — until the next general election.

In the mean while the polling had gone on slowly as before, but still to the advantage of Randal. "Not two-thirds of the constituency will poll," murmured Levy, looking at his watch. "The thing is decided. Aha, Audley Egerton! you who once tortured me with the unspeakable jealousy that bequeaths such implacable hate; you who scorned my society, and called me 'scoundrel,' disdainful of the very power your folly placed within my hands,—aha, your time is up! and the spirit that administered to your own destruction strides within the circle to seize its prey!"

"You shall have my first frank, Levy," said Randal, "to enclose your letter to Mr. Thornhill's solicitor. This affair of the election is over; we must now look to what else rests on our hands."

"What the devil is that placard?" cried Levy, turning pale.

Randal looked, and right up the market-place, followed by

an immense throng, moved, high over the heads of all, a Yellow Board, that seemed marching through the air, comet-like:—

Two o'clock p. m.

RESIGNATION OF FAIRFIELD.

YELLOWS!

VOTE FOR

AVENEL AND EGERTON.

(Signed)

TIMOTHY ALLJACK.

Yellow Committee Room.

“What infernal treachery is this?” cried Randal, livid with honest indignation.

“Wait a moment; there is Avenel!” exclaimed Levy; and at the head of another procession that emerged from the obscurer lanes of the town, walked, with grave majesty, the surviving Yellow candidate. Dick disappeared for a moment within a grocer’s shop in the broadest part of the place, and then culminated at the height of a balcony on the first story, just above an enormous yellow canister, significant of the profession and the politics of the householder. No sooner did Dick, hat in hand, appear on this rostrum, than the two processions halted below, bands ceased, flags drooped round their staves, crowds rushed within hearing, and even the poll-clerks sprang from the booth. Randal and Levy themselves pressed into the throng. Dick on the balcony was the *Deus ex machina*.

“Freemen and electors!” said Dick, with his most sonorous accents, “finding that the public opinion of this independent and enlightened constituency is so evenly divided, that only one Yellow candidate can be returned, and only one Blue has a chance, it was my intention last night to retire from the contest, and thus put an end to all bickerings and ill-blood (Hold your tongues there, can’t you!). I say hon-

estly, I should have preferred the return of my distinguished and talented young nephew — honourable relation — to my own; but he would not hear of it, and talked all our Committee into the erroneous but high-minded notion, that the town would cry shame if the nephew rode into parliament by breaking the back of the uncle." (Loud cheers from the mob, and partial cries of "We 'll have you both!")

"You 'll do no such thing, and you know it; hold your jaw," resumed Dick, with imperious good-humour. "Let me go on, can't you? — time presses. In a word, my nephew resolved to retire, if, at two o'clock this day, there was no chance of returning both of us; and there is none. Now, then, the next thing for the Yellows who have not yet voted, is to consider how they will give their second votes. If I had been the man to retire, why, for certain reasons, I should have recommended them to split with Leslie, — a clever chap, and pretty considerable sharp."

"Hear, hear, hear!" cried the baron, lustily.

"But I'm bound to say that my nephew has an opinion of his own, — as an independent Britisher, let him be twice your nephew, ought to have; and his opinion goes the other way, and so does that of our Committee."

"Sold!" cried the baron; and some of the crowd shook their heads, and looked grave, — especially those suspected of a wish to be bought.

"Sold! Pretty fellow you with the nosegay in your button-hole to talk of selling! You who wanted to sell your own client, — and you know it. [Levy recoiled.] Why, gentlemen, that's Levy the Jew, who talks of selling! And if he asperses the character of this constituency, I stand here to defend it! And there stands the parish pump, with a handle for the arm of Honesty, and a spout for the lips of Falsehood!"

At the close of this magniloquent period, borrowed, no doubt, from some great American orator, Baron Levy involuntarily retreated towards the shelter of the polling-booth, followed by some frowning Yellows with very menacing gestures.

"But the calumniator sneaks away; leave him to the reproach of his conscience," resumed Dick, with a generous magnanimity.

"SOLD! [the word rang through the place like the blast of a trumpet] Sold! No, believe me, not a man who votes for Egerton instead of Fairfield will, so far as I am concerned, be a penny the better — [chilling silence] — or [with a scarce perceivable wink towards the anxious faces of the Hundred and Fifty who filled the background] — or a penny the worse. [Loud cheers from the Hundred and Fifty, and cries of 'Noble!'] I don't like the politics of Mr. Egerton. But I am not only a politician, — I am a MAN! The arguments of our respected Committee — persons in business, tender husbands, and devoted fathers — have weight with me. I myself am a husband and a father. If a needless contest be prolonged to the last, with all the irritations it engenders, who suffer? — why, the tradesman and the operative. Partiality, loss of custom, tyrannical demands for house rent, notices to quit, — in a word, the screw!"

"Hear, hear!" and "Give us the Ballot!"

"The Ballot — with all my heart, if I had it about me! And if we had the Ballot, I should like to see a man dare to vote Blue. [Loud cheers from the Yellows.] But, as we have not got it, we must think of our families. And I may add, that though Mr. Egerton may come again into office, yet [added Dick solemnly] I will do my best, as his colleague, to keep him straight; and your own enlightenment (for the schoolmaster is abroad) will show him that no minister can brave public opinion, nor quarrel with his own bread and butter. [Much cheering.] In these times the aristocracy must endear themselves to the middle and working class; and a member in office has much to give away in the Stamps and Excise, in the Customs, the Post Office, and other State departments in this rotten old — I mean this magnificent empire, by which he can benefit his constituents, and reconcile the prerogatives of aristocracy with the claims of the people, — more especially in this case, the people of the borough of Lansmere. [Hear, hear!]

"And therefore, sacrificing party inclinations (since it seems that I can in no way promote them) on the Altar of General Good Feeling, I cannot oppose the resignation of my nephew,—honourable relation!—nor blind my eyes to the advantages that may result to a borough so important to the nation at large, if the electors think fit to choose my Right Honourable broth—I mean the Right Honourable Blue candidate—as my brother colleague. Not that I presume to dictate, or express a wish one way or the other; only, as a Family Man, I say to you, Electors and Freemen, having served your country in returning me, you have nobly won the right to think of the little ones at home."

Dick put his hand to his heart, bowed gracefully, and retired from the balcony amidst unanimous applause.

In three minutes more Dick had resumed his place in the booth in his quality of candidate. A rush of Yellow electors poured in, hot and fast. Up came Emanuel Trout, and, in a firm voice, recorded his vote, "Avenel and Egerton." Every man of the Hundred and Fifty so polled. To each question, "Whom do you vote for?" "Avenel and Egerton" knelled on the ears of Randal Leslie with "damnable iteration." The young man folded his arms across his breast in dogged despair. Levy had to shake hands for Mr. Egerton with a rapidity that took away his breath. He longed to slink away,—longed to get at L'Estrange, whom he supposed would be as wroth at this turn in the wheel of fortune as himself. But how, as Egerton's representative, escape from the continuous gripes of those horny hands? Besides, there stood the parish pump, right in face of the booth, and some huge truculent-looking Yellows loitered round it, as if ready to pounce on him the instant he quitted his present sanctuary. Suddenly the crowd round the booth receded; Lord L'Estrange's carriage drove up to the spot, and Harley, stepping from it, assisted out of the vehicle an old, gray-haired, paralytic man. The old man stared round him, and nodded smilingly to the mob. "I'm here,—I'm come; I'm but a poor creature, but I'm a good Blue to the last!"

"Old John Avenel,—fine old John!" cried many a voice.

And John Avenel, still leaning on Harley's arm, tottered into the booth, and plumped for "Egerton."

"Shake hands, Father," said Dick, bending forward, "though you'll not vote for me."

"I was a Blue before you were born," answered the old man, tremulously; "but I wish you success all the same, and God bless you, my boy!"

Even the poll-clerks were touched; and when Dick, leaving his place, was seen by the crowd assisting Lord L'Estrange to place poor John again in the carriage, that picture of family love in the midst of political difference — of the prosperous, wealthy, energetic son, who, as a boy, had played at marbles in the very kennel, and who had risen in life by his own exertions, and was now virtually M. P. for his native town, tending on the broken-down, aged father, whom even the interests of a son he was so proud of could not win from the colours which he associated with truth and rectitude — had such an effect upon the rudest of the mob there present, that you might have heard a pin fall, — till the carriage drove away back to John's humble home; and then there rose such a tempest of huzzas! John Avenel's vote for Egerton gave another turn to the vicissitudes of that memorable election. As yet Avenel had been ahead of Audley; but a plumper in favour of Egerton, from Avenel's own father, set an example and gave an excuse to many a Blue who had not yet voted, and could not prevail on himself to split his vote between Dick and Audley; and, therefore, several leading tradesmen, who, seeing that Egerton was safe, had previously resolved not to vote at all, came up in the last hour, plumped for Egerton, and carried him to the head of the poll; so that poor John, whose vote, involving that of Mark Fairfield, had secured the first opening in public life to the young ambition of the unknown son-in-law, still contributed to connect with success and triumph, but also with sorrow, and, it may be, with death, the names of the high-born Egerton and the humble Avenel.

The great town-clock strikes the hour of four; the returning officer declares the poll closed; the formal announcement

of the result will be made later. But all the town knows that Audley Egerton and Richard Avenel are the members for Lansmere. And flags stream, and drums beat, and men shake each other by the hand heartily; and there is talk of the chairing to-morrow; and the public-houses are crowded; and there is an indistinct hubbub in street and alley, with sudden bursts of uproarious shouting; and the clouds to the west look red and lurid round the sun, which has gone down behind the church tower,—behind the yew-trees that overshadow the quiet grave of Nora Avenel.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AMIDST the darkening shadows of twilight, Randal Leslie walked through Lansmere Park towards the house. He had slunk away before the poll was closed,—crept through by-lanes, and plunged into the leafless copses of the earl's stately pasture-grounds. Amidst the bewilderment of his thoughts—at a loss to conjecture how this strange mischance had befallen him, inclined to ascribe it to Leonard's influence over Avenel, but suspecting Harley, and half doubtful of Baron Levy—he sought to ascertain what fault of judgment he himself had committed, what wile he had forgotten, what thread in his web he had left ragged and incomplete. He could discover none. His ability seemed to him unimpeachable,—*totus, teres, atque rotundus*. And then there came across his breast a sharp pang,—sharper than that of baffled ambition,—the feeling that he had been deceived and bubbled and betrayed. For so vital a necessity to all living men is TRUTH, that the vilest traitor feels amazed and wronged, feels the pillars of the world shaken, when treason recoils on himself. "That Richard Avenel, whom I trusted, could so deceive me!" murmured Randal, and his lip quivered.

He was still in the midst of the Park, when a man with a yellow cockade in his hat, and running fast from the direc-

tion of the town, overtook him with a letter, on delivering which the messenger, waiting for no answer, hastened back the way he had come. Randal recognized Avenel's hand on the address, broke the seal, and read as follows:—

(Private and Confidential.)

DEAR LESLIE, — Don't be down-hearted, — you will know to-night or to-morrow why I have had cause to alter my opinion as to the Right Honourable; and you will see that I could not, as a Family Man, act otherwise than I have done. Though I have not broken my word to you, — for you remember that all the help I promised was dependent on my own resignation, and would go for nothing if Leonard resigned instead, — yet I feel you must think yourself rather bamboozled. But I have been obliged to sacrifice you, from a sense of Family Duty, as you will soon acknowledge. My own nephew is sacrificed also; and I have sacrificed my own concerns, which require the whole man of me for the next year or two at Screwestown. So we are all in the same boat, though you may think you are set adrift by yourself. But I don't mean to stay in parliament. I shall take the Chiltern Hundreds, pretty considerable soon. And if you keep well with the Blues, I'll do my best with the Yellows to let you walk over the course in my stead. For I don't think Leonard will want to stand again. And so a word to the wise, — and you may yet be member for Lansmere.

R. A.

In this letter, Randal, despite all his acuteness, could not detect the honest compunction of the writer. He could at first only look at the worst side of human nature, and fancy that it was a paltry attempt to stifle his just anger and ensure his discretion; but, on second thoughts, it struck him that Dick might very naturally be glad to be released to his mill, and get a *quid pro quo* out of Randal, under the comprehensive title, "repayment of expenses." Perhaps Dick was not sorry to wait until Randal's marriage gave him the means to make the repayment. Nay, perhaps Randal had been thrown over for the present, in order to wring from him better terms in a single election. Thus reasoning, he took comfort from his belief in the mercenary motives of another. True, it might be but a short disappointment. Before the next parliament was a month old, he might yet take his seat

in it as member for Lansmere. But all would depend on his marriage with the heiress; he must hasten that.

Meanwhile, it was necessary to knit and gather up all his thought, courage, and presence of mind. How he shrunk from return to Lansmere House,—from facing Egerton, Harley, all. But there was no choice. He would have to make it up with the Blues,—to defend the course he had adopted in the Committee-room. There, no doubt, was Squire Hazelden awaiting him with the purchase-money for the lands of Rood; there was the Duke di Serrano, restored to wealth and honour; there was his promised bride, the great heiress, on whom depended all that could raise the needy gentleman into wealth and position. Gradually, with the elastic temper that is essential to a systematic schemer, Randal Leslie plucked himself from the pain of brooding over a plot that was defeated, to prepare himself for consummating those that yet seemed so near success. After all, should he fail in regaining Egerton's favour, Egerton was of use no more. He might rear his head, and face out what some might call "ingratitude," provided he could but satisfy the Blue Committee. Dull dogs, how could he fail to do that! He could easily talk over the Machiavellian sage. He should have small difficulty in explaining all to the content of Audley's distant brother, the squire. Harley alone—but Levy had so positively assured him that Harley was not sincerely anxious for Egerton; and as to the more important explanation relative to Peschiera, surely what had satisfied Violante's father ought to satisfy a man who had no peculiar right to demand explanations at all; and if these explanations did not satisfy, the onus to disprove them must rest with Harley; and who or what could contradict Randal's plausible assertions,—assertions in support of which he himself could summon a witness in Baron Levy? Thus nerving himself to all that could task his powers, Randal Leslie crossed the threshold of Lansmere House, and in the hall he found the baron awaiting him.

"I can't account," said Levy, "for what has gone so cross in this confounded election. It is L'Estrange that puzzles me; but I know that he hates Egerton. I know that he will

prove that hate by one mode of revenge, if he has lost it in another. But it is well, Randal, that you are secure of Hazeldean's money and the rich heiress's hand; otherwise — ”

“Otherwise, what?”

“I should wash my hands of you, *mon cher*; for, in spite of all your cleverness, and all I have tried to do for you, somehow or other I begin to suspect that your talents will never secure your fortune. A carpenter's son beats you in public speaking, and a vulgar mill-owner tricks you in private negotiation. Decidedly, as yet, Randal Leslie, you are — a failure. And, as you so admirably said, ‘a man from whom we have nothing to hope or fear we must blot out of the map of the future.’ ”

Randal's answer was cut short by the appearance of the groom of the chambers.

“My Lord is in the saloon, and requests you and Mr. Leslie will do him the honour to join him there.” The two gentlemen followed the servant up the broad stairs.

The saloon formed the centre room of the suite of apartments. From its size, it was rarely used save on state occasions. It had the chilly and formal aspect of rooms reserved for ceremony.

Riccabocca, Violante, Helen, Mr. Dale, Squire Hazeldean, and Lord L'Estrange were grouped together by the cold Florentine marble table, not littered with books and female work, and the endearing signs of habitation, that give a living smile to the face of home; nothing thereon save a great silver candelabrum, that scarcely lighted the spacious room, and brought out the portraits on the walls as a part of the assembly, looking, as portraits do look, with searching, curious eyes upon every eye that turns to them.

But as soon as Randal entered, the squire detached himself from the group, and, coming to the defeated candidate, shook hands with him heartily.

“Cheer up, my boy; 't is no shame to be beaten. Lord L'Estrange says you did your best to win, and man can do no more. And I'm glad, Leslie, that we don't meet for our

little business till the election is over; for, after annoyance, something pleasant is twice as acceptable. I've the money in my pocket. Hush! and I say, my dear, dear boy, I cannot find out where Frank is, but it is really all off with that foreign woman, eh?"

"Yes, indeed, sir, I hope so. I'll talk to you about it when we can be alone. We may slip away presently, I trust."

"I'll tell you a secret scheme of mine and Harry's," said the squire, in a still low whisper. "We must drive that marchioness, or whatever she is, out of the boy's head, and put a pretty English girl into it instead. That will settle him in life too. And I must try and swallow that bitter pill of the post-obit. Harry makes worse of it than I do, and is so hard on the poor fellow that I've been obliged to take his part. I've no idea of being under petticoat government,—it is not the way with the Hazeldeans. Well, but to come back to the point: Whom do you think I mean by the pretty girl?"

"Miss Sticktorights?"

"Zounds, no!—your own little sister, Randal. Sweet pretty face! Harry liked her from the first, and then you'll be Frank's brother, and your sound head and good heart will keep him right. And as you are going to be married too (you must tell me all about that later), why, we shall have two marriages, perhaps, in the family on the same day."

Randal's hand grasped the squire's, and with an emotion of human gratitude,—for we know that, hard to all else, he had natural feelings for his fallen family; and his neglected sister was the one being on earth whom he might almost be said to love. With all his intellectual disdain for honest simple Frank, he knew no one in the world with whom his young sister could be more secure and happy. Transferred to the roof, and improved by the active kindness, of Mrs. Hazeldean, blest in the manly affection of one not too refined to censure her own deficiencies of education, what more could he ask for his sister, as he pictured her to himself, with her hair hanging over her ears, and her mind running into seed

over some trashy novel. But before he could reply, Violante's father came to add his own philosophical consolations to the squire's downright comfortings.

"Who could ever count on popular caprice? The wise of all ages had despised it. In that respect, Horace and Machiavelli were of the same mind," etc. "But," said the duke, with emphatic kindness, "perhaps your very misfortune here may serve you elsewhere. The female heart is prone to pity, and ever eager to comfort. Besides, if I am recalled to Italy, you will have leisure to come with us, and see the land where, of all others, ambition can be most readily forgotten, even" — added the Italian with a sigh, — "even by her own sons!"

Thus addressed by both Hazeldean and the duke, Randal recovered his spirits. It was clear that Lord L'Estrange had not conveyed to them any unfavourable impression of his conduct in the Committee-room. While Randal had been thus engaged, Levy had made his way to Harley, who retreated with the baron into the bay of the great window.

"Well, my Lord, do you comprehend this conduct on the part of Richard Avenel? He secures Egerton's return! — he!"

"What so natural, Baron Levy, — his own brother-in-law?"

The baron started, and turned very pale.

"But how did he know that? I never told him. I meant indeed —"

"Meant, perhaps, to shame Egerton's pride at the last by publicly declaring his marriage with a shopkeeper's daughter. A very good revenge still left to you; but revenge for what? A word with you, now, Baron, that our acquaintance is about to close forever. You know why I have cause for resentment against Egerton. I do but suspect yours; will you make it clear to me?"

"My Lord, my Lord," faltered Baron Levy, "I, too, wooed Nora Avenel as my wife; I, too, had a happier rival in the haughty worldling who did not appreciate his own felicity; I too — in a word, some women inspire an affection that mingles with the entire being of a man, and is fused with all the currents of his life-blood. Nora Avenel was one of those women."

Harley was startled. This burst of emotion from a man so corrupt and cynical arrested even the scorn he felt for the usurer. Levy soon recovered himself. "But our revenge is not baffled yet. Egerton, if not already in my power, is still in yours. His election may save him from arrest, but the law has other modes of public exposure and effectual ruin."

"For the knave, yes, — as I intimated to you in your own house, — you who boast of your love to Nora Avenel, and know in your heart that you were her destroyer; you who witnessed her marriage, and yet dared to tell her that she was dishonoured!"

"My Lord — I — how could you know — I mean, how think that — that —" faltered Levy, aghast.

"Nora Avenel has spoken from her grave," replied Harley, solemnly. "Learn that, wherever man commits a crime, Heaven finds a witness!"

"It is on me, then," said Levy, wrestling against a superstitious thrill at his heart — "on me that you now concentrate your vengeance; and I must meet it as I may. But I have fulfilled my part of our compact. I have obeyed you implicitly — and —"

"I will fulfil my part of our bond, and leave you undisturbed in your wealth."

"I knew I might trust to your Lordship's honour," exclaimed the usurer, in servile glee.

"And this vile creature nursed the same passions as myself; and but yesterday we were partners in the same purpose, and influenced by the same thought!" muttered Harley to himself. "Yes," he said aloud, "I dare not, Baron Levy, constitute myself your judge. Pursue your own path, — all roads meet at last before the common tribunal. But you are not yet released from our compact; you must do some good in spite of yourself. Look yonder, where Randal Leslie stands, smiling secure, between the two dangers he has raised up for himself. And as Randal Leslie himself has invited me to be his judge, and you are aware that he cited yourself this very day as his witness, here I must expose the guilty; for **here** the innocent still live, and need defence."

Harley turned away, and took his place by the table. "I have wished," said he, raising his voice, "to connect with the triumph of my earliest and dearest friend the happiness of others in whose welfare I feel an interest. To you, Alphonso, Duke of Serrano, I now give this despatch, received last evening by a special messenger from the Prince Von —, announcing your restoration to your lands and honours."

The squire stared with open mouth. "Rickeybockey a duke? Why, Jemima's a duchess! Bless me, she is actually crying!" And his good heart prompted him to run to his cousin and cheer her up a bit.

Violante glanced at Harley, and flung herself on her father's breast. Randal involuntarily rose, and moved to the duke's chair.

"And you, Mr. Randal Leslie," continued Harley, "though you have lost your election, see before you at this moment such prospects of wealth and happiness, that I shall only have to offer you congratulations to which those that greet Mr. Audley Egerton may well appear lukewarm and insipid, provided you prove that you have not forfeited the right to claim that promise which the Duke di Serrano has accorded to the suitor of his daughter's hand. Some doubts resting on my mind, you have volunteered to dispel them. I have the duke's permission to address to you a few questions, and I now avail myself of your offer to reply to them."

"Now, — and here, my Lord?" said Randal, glancing round the room, as if deprecating the presence of so many witnesses.

"Now, — and here. Nor are those present so strange to your explanations as your question would imply. Mr. Hazeldean, it so happens that much of what I shall say to Mr. Leslie concerns your son."

Randal's countenance fell. An uneasy tremor now seized him.

"My son! Frank? Oh, then, of course, Randal will speak out. Speak, my boy!"

Randal remained silent. The duke looked at his working face, and drew away his chair.

"Young man, can you hesitate?" said he. "A doubt is expressed which involves your honour."

"'S death!" cried the squire, also gazing on Randal's cowering eye and quivering lip, "what are you afraid of?"

"Afraid!" said Randal, forced into speech, and with a hollow laugh — "afraid? — I? What of? I was only wondering what Lord L'Estrange could mean."

"I will dispel that wonder at once. Mr. Hazeldean, your son displeased you first by his proposals of marriage to the Marchesa di Negra against your consent; secondly, by a post-obit bond granted to Baron Levy. Did you understand from Mr. Randal Leslie that he had opposed or favoured the said marriage, — that he had countenanced or blamed the said post-obit?"

"Why, of course," cried the squire, "that he had opposed both the one and the other."

"Is it so, Mr. Leslie?"

"My Lord — I — I — my affection for Frank, and my esteem for his respected father — I — I —" (He nerved himself, and went on with firm voice) — "Of course, I did all I could to dissuade Frank from the marriage; and as to the post-obit, I know nothing about it."

"So much at present for this matter. I pass on to the graver one, that affects your engagement with the Duke di Serrano's daughter. I understand from you, Duke, that to save your daughter from the snares of Count di Peschiera, and in the belief that Mr. Leslie shared in your dread of the count's designs, you, while in exile and in poverty, promised to that gentleman your daughter's hand? When the probabilities of restoration to your principalities seemed well-nigh certain, you confirmed that promise on learning from Mr. Leslie that he had, however ineffectively, struggled to preserve your heiress from a perfidious snare. Is it not so?"

"Certainly. Had I succeeded to a throne, I could not recall the promise that I had given in penury and banishment; I could not refuse to him who would have sacrificed worldly ambition in wedding a penniless bride, the reward of his own generosity. My daughter subscribes to my views."

Violante trembled, and her hands were locked together; but her gaze was fixed on Harley.

Mr. Dale wiped his eyes, and thought of the poor refugee feeding on minnows, and preserving himself from debt amongst the shades of the Casino.

"Your answer becomes you, Duke," resumed Harley. "But should it be proved that Mr. Leslie, instead of wooing the princess for herself, actually calculated on the receipt of money for transferring her to Count Peschiera; instead of saving her from the dangers you dreaded, actually suggested the snare from which she was delivered,—would you still deem your honour engaged to—"

"Such a villain? No, surely not!" exclaimed the duke. "But this is a groundless hypothesis! Speak, Randal."

"Lord L'Estrange cannot insult me by deeming it otherwise than a groundless hypothesis!" said Randal, striving to rear his head.

"I understand then, Mr. Leslie, that you scornfully reject such a supposition?"

"Scornfully—yes. And," continued Randal, advancing a step, "since the supposition has been made, I demand from Lord L'Estrange, as his equal (for all gentlemen are equals where honour is to be defended at the cost of life), either instant retractation—or instant proof."

"That's the first word you have spoken like a man," cried the squire. "I have stood my ground myself for a less cause. I have had a ball through my right shoulder."

"Your demand is just," said Harley, unmoved. "I cannot give the retractation,—I will produce the proof."

He rose and rang the bell; the servant entered, received his whispered order, and retired. There was a pause painful to all. Randal, however, ran over in his fearful mind what evidence could be brought against him—and foresaw none. The folding doors of the saloon were thrown open and the servant announced—

THE COUNT DI PESCHIERA.

A bombshell descending through the roof could not have produced a more startling sensation. Erect, bold, with all the imposing effect of his form and bearing, the count strode

into the centre of the ring; and after a slight bend of haughty courtesy, which comprehended all present, reared up his lofty head, and looked round, with calm in his eye and a curve on his lip,—the self-assured, magnificent, high-bred Daredevil.

“Duke di Serrano,” said the count, in English, turning towards his astounded kinsman, and in a voice that, slow, clear, and firm, seemed to fill the room, “I returned to England on the receipt of a letter from my Lord L’Estrange, and with a view, it is true, of claiming at his hands the satisfaction which men of our birth accord to each other, where affront, from what cause soever, has been given or received. Nay, fair kinswoman,”—and the count, with a slight but grave smile, bowed to Violante, who had uttered a faint cry,—“that intention is abandoned. If I have adopted too lightly the old courtly maxim, that ‘all stratagems are fair in love,’ I am bound also to yield to my Lord L’Estrange’s arguments, that the counter-stratagems must be fair also. And, after all, it becomes me better to laugh at my own sorry figure in defeat, than to confess myself gravely mortified by an ingenuity more successful than my own.” The count paused, and his eye lightened with sinister fire, which ill suited the raillery of his tone and the polished ease of his bearing. “*Ma foi!*” he continued, “it is permitted me to speak thus, since at least I have given proofs of my indifference to danger, and my good fortune when exposed to it. Within the last six years I have had the honour to fight nine duels, and the regret to wound five, and dismiss from the world four, as gallant and worthy gentlemen as ever the sun shone upon.”

“Monster!” faltered the parson.

The squire stared aghast, and mechanically rubbed the shoulder which had been lacerated by Captain Dashmore’s bullet. Randal’s pale face grew yet more pale, and the eye he had fixed upon the count’s hardy visage quailed and fell.

“But,” resumed the count, with a graceful wave of the hand, “I have to thank my Lord L’Estrange for reminding me that a man whose courage is above suspicion is privileged not only to apologize if he has injured another, but to accom-

pany apology with atonement. Duke of Serrano, it is for that purpose that I am here. My Lord, you have signified your wish to ask me some questions of serious import as regards the duke and his daughter; I will answer them without reserve."

"Monsieur le Comte," said Harley, "availing myself of your courtesy, I presume to inquire who informed you that this young lady was a guest under my father's roof?"

"My informant stands yonder,— Mr. Randal Leslie; and I call upon Baron Levy to confirm my statement."

"It is true," said the baron, slowly, and as if overmastered by the tone and mien of an imperious chieftain.

There came a low sound like a hiss from Randal's livid lips.

"And was Mr. Leslie acquainted with your project for securing the person and hand of your young kinswoman?"

"Certainly,— and Baron Levy knows it." The baron bowed assent. "Permit me to add — for it is due to a lady nearly related to myself — that it was, as I have since learned, certain erroneous representations made to her by Mr. Leslie which alone induced that lady, after my own arguments had failed, to lend her aid to a project which otherwise she would have condemned as strongly as, Duke di Serrano, I now with unfeigned sincerity do myself condemn it."

There was about the count, as he thus spoke, so much of that personal dignity which, whether natural or artificial, imposes for the moment upon human judgment,— a dignity so supported by the singular advantages of his superb stature, his handsome countenance, his patrician air,— that the duke, moved by his good heart, extended his hand to the perfidious kinsman, and forgot all the Machiavellian wisdom which should have told him how little a man of the count's hardened profligacy was likely to be influenced by any purer motives, whether to frank confession or to manly repentance. The count took the hand thus extended to him, and bowed his face, perhaps to conceal the smile which would have betrayed his secret soul. Randal still remained mute, and pale as death. His tongue clove to his mouth. He felt that all

present were shrinking from his side. At last, with a violent effort, he faltered out, in broken sentences,—

“A charge so sudden may well — may well confound me. But — but — who can credit it? Both the law and common-sense pre-suppose some motive for a criminal action; what could be my motive here? I — myself the suitor for the hand of the duke’s daughter — *I* betray her! Absurd — absurd! Duke, Duke, I put it to your own knowledge of mankind: whoever goes thus against his own interest — and — and his own heart?”

This appeal, however feebly made, was not without effect on the philosopher. “That is true,” said the duke, dropping his kinsman’s hand; “I see no motive.”

“Perhaps,” said Harley, “Baron Levy may here enlighten us. Do you know of any motive of self-interest that could have actuated Mr. Leslie in assisting the count’s schemes?”

Levy hesitated. The count took up the word. “*Pardieu!*” said he, in his clear tone of determination and will — “*pardieu!* I can have no doubt thrown on my assertion, least of all by those who know of its truth; and I call upon you, Baron Levy, to state whether, in case of my marriage with the duke’s daughter, I had not agreed to present my sister with a sum, to which she alleged some ancient claim, and which would have passed through your hands?”

“Certainly, that is true,” said the baron.

“And would Mr. Leslie have benefited by any portion of that sum?”

Levy paused again.

“Speak, sir,” said the count, frowning.

“The fact is,” said the baron, “that Mr. Leslie was anxious to complete a purchase of certain estates that had once belonged to his family, and that the count’s marriage with the signora, and his sister’s marriage with Mr. Hazeldean, would have enabled me to accommodate Mr. Leslie with a loan to effect that purchase.”

“What! what!” exclaimed the squire, hastily buttoning his breast-pocket with one hand, while he seized Randal’s arm with the other — “my son’s marriage! You lent your-

self to that, too? Don't look so like a lashed hound! Speak out like a man, if man you be!"

"Lent himself to that, my good sir!" said the count. "Do you suppose that the Marchesa di Negra could have condescended to an alliance with a Mr. Hazeldean —"

"Condescended! a Hazeldean of Hazeldean!" exclaimed the squire, turning fiercely, and half choked with indignation.

"Unless," continued the count, imperturbably, "she had been compelled by circumstances to do that said Mr. Hazeldean the honour to accept a pecuniary accommodation, which she had no other mode to discharge? And here, sir, the family of Hazeldean, I am bound to say, owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr. Leslie; for it was he who most forcibly represented to her the necessity for this *mésalliance*; and it was he, I believe, who suggested to my friend the baron the mode by which Mr. Hazeldean was best enabled to afford the accommodation my sister deigned to accept."

"Mode! the post-obit!" ejaculated the squire, relinquishing his hold of Randal to lay his gripe upon Levy.

The baron shrugged his shoulders. "Any friend of Mr. Frank Hazeldean's would have recommended the same, as the most economical mode of raising money."

Parson Dale, who had at first been more shocked than any one present at these gradual revelations of Randal's treachery, now turning his eyes towards the young man, was so seized with commiseration at the sight of Randal's face, that he laid his hand on Harley's arm, and whispered him, "Look, look at that countenance! — and one so young! Spare him, spare him!"

"Mr. Leslie," said Harley, in softened tones, "believe me that nothing short of justice to the Duke di Serrano — justice even to my young friend Mr. Hazeldean — has compelled me to this painful duty. Here let all inquiry terminate."

"And," said the count, with exquisite blandness, "since I have been informed by my Lord L'Estrange that Mr. Leslie has represented as a serious act on his part that personal challenge to myself, which I understood was but a pleasant and amicable arrangement in our baffled scheme, let me assure

Mr. Leslie that if he be not satisfied with the regret that I now express for the leading share I have taken in these disclosures, I am wholly at Mr. Leslie's service."

"Peace, homicide," cried the parson, shuddering; and he glided to the side of the detected sinner, from whom all else had recoiled in loathing.

Craft against craft, talent against talent, treason against treason — in all this Randal Leslie would have risen superior to Giulio di Peschiera. But what now crushed him was not the superior intellect, — it was the sheer brute power of audacity and nerve. Here stood the careless, unblushing villain, making light of his guilt, carrying it away from disgust itself, with resolute look and front erect. There stood the abler, subtler, profounder criminal, cowering, abject, pitiful; the power of mere intellectual knowledge shivered into pieces against the brazen metal with which the accident of constitution often arms some ignobler nature.

The contrast was striking, and implied that truth so universally felt, yet so little acknowledged in actual life, that men with audacity and force of character can subdue and paralyze those far superior to themselves in ability and intelligence. It was these qualities which made Peschiera Randal's master; nay, the very physical attributes of the count, his very voice and form, his bold front and unshrinking eye, overpowered the acuter mind of the refining schemer, as in a popular assembly some burly Cleon crows into timorous silence every dissentient sage. But Randal turned in sullen impatience from the parson's whisper, that breathed comfort or urged repentance; and at length said, with clearer tones than he had yet mustered, —

"It is not a personal conflict with the Count di Peschiera that can vindicate my honour; and I disdain to defend myself against the accusations of a usurer, and of a man who —"

"Monsieur!" said the count, drawing himself up.

"A man who," persisted Randal, though he trembled visibly, "by his own confession, was himself guilty of all the schemes in which he would represent me as his accomplice,

and who now, not clearing himself, would yet convict another — ”

“*Cher petit monsieur !*” said the count, with his grand air of disdain, “when men like me make use of men like you, we reward them for a service if rendered, or discard them if the service be not done; and if I condescend to confess and apologize for any act I have committed, surely Mr. Randal Leslie might do the same without disparagement to his dignity. But I should never, sir, have taken the trouble to appear against you, had you not, as I learn, pretended to the hand of the lady whom I had hoped, with less presumption, to call my bride; and in this, how can I tell that you have not tricked and betrayed me? Is there anything in our past acquaintance that warrants me to believe that, instead of serving me, you sought but to serve yourself? Be that as it may, I had but one mode of repairing to the head of my house the wrongs I have done him, and that was by saving his daughter from a derogatory alliance with an impostor who had abetted my schemes for hire, and who now would filch for himself their fruit.”

“Duke!” exclaimed Randal.

The duke turned his back. Randal extended his hands to the squire. “Mr. Hazeldean — what? you, too, condemn me, and unheard?”

“Unheard! — zounds, no! If you have anything to say, speak truth, and shame the devil.”

“I abet Frank’s marriage! I sanction the post-obit! Oh!” cried Randal, clinging to a straw, “if Frank himself were but here!”

Harley’s compassion vanished before this sustained hypocrisy.

“You wish for the presence of Frank Hazeldean? It is just.”

Harley opened the door of the inner room, and Frank appeared at the entrance.

“My son! my son!” cried the squire, rushing forward, and clasping Frank to his broad, fatherly breast.

This affecting incident gave a sudden change to the feelings of the audience, and for a moment Randal himself was for-

gotten. The young man seized that moment. Reprieved, as it were, from the glare of contemptuous, accusing eyes, slowly he crept to the door, slowly and noiselessly, as the viper, when it is wounded, drops its crest and glides writhing through the grass. Levy followed him to the threshold, and whispered in his ear,—

“I could not help it,—you would have done the same by me. You see you have failed in everything; and when a man fails completely, we both agreed that we must give him up altogether.”

Randal said not a word, and the baron marked his shadow fall on the broad stairs, stealing down, down, step after step, till it faded from the stones.

“But he was of some use,” muttered Levy. “His treachery and his exposure will gall the childless Egerton. Some little revenge still!”

The count touched the arm of the musing usurer,—

“J’ai bien joué mon rôle, n’est ce pas?” — (I have well played my part, have I not?)

“Your part! Ah, but, my dear count, I do not quite understand it.”

“*Ma foi*, you are passably dull. I had just been landed in France, when a letter from L’Estrange reached me. It was couched as an invitation, which I interpreted to — the *duello*. Such invitations I never refuse. I replied. I came hither, took my lodgings at an inn. My Lord seeks me last night. I begin in the tone you may suppose. *Pardieu!* he is clever, milord! He shows me a letter from the Prince Von —, Alphonso’s recall, my own banishment. He places before me, but with admirable suavity, the option of beggary and ruin, or an honourable claim on Alphonso’s gratitude. And as for that *petit monsieur*, do you think I could quietly contemplate my own tool’s enjoyment of all I had lost myself? Nay, more, if that young Harpagon were Alphonso’s son-in-law, could the duke have a whisperer at his ear more fatal to my own interests? To be brief, I saw at a glance my best course. I have adopted it. The difficulty was to extricate myself as became a man *de sang et de feu*. If I have done

so, congratulate me. Alphonso has taken my hand, and I now leave it to him to attend to my fortunes, and clear up my repute."

"If you are going to London," said Levy, "my carriage, ere this, must be at the door, and I shall be proud to offer you a seat, and converse with you on your prospects. But, *peste, mon cher*, your fall has been from a great height, and any other man would have broken his bones."

"Strength is ever light," said the count, smiling; "and it does not fall; it leaps down and rebounds."

Levy looked at the count, and blamed himself for having disparaged Peschiera and overrated Randal.

While this conference went on, Harley was by Violante's side.

"I have kept my promise to you," said he, with a kind of tender humility. "Are you still so severe on me?"

"Ah," answered Violante, gazing on his noble brow, with all a woman's pride in her eloquent, admiring eyes, "I have heard from Mr. Dale that you have achieved a conquest over yourself, which makes me ashamed to think that I presumed to doubt how your heart would speak when a moment of wrath (though of wrath so just) had passed away."

"No, Violante, do not acquit me yet; witness my revenge (for I have not foregone it), and then let my heart speak, and breathe its prayer that the angel voice, which it now beats to hear, may still be its guardian monitor."

"What is this?" cried an amazed voice; and Harley, turning round, saw that the duke was by his side; and, glancing with ludicrous surprise, now to Harley, now to Violante, "Am I to understand that you —"

"Have freed you from one suitor for this dear hand, to become myself your petitioner!"

"*Corpo di Bacco!*" cried the sage, almost embracing Harley, "this, indeed, is joyful news. But I must not again make a rash pledge,—not again force my child's inclinations. And Violante, you see, is running away."

The duke stretched out his arm, and detained his child. He drew her to his breast, and whispered in her ear. Vio-

lante blushed crimson, and rested her head on his shoulder, Harley eagerly pressed forward.

"There," said the duke, joining Harley's hand with his daughter's, "I don't think I shall hear much more of the convent; but anything of this sort I never suspected. If there be a language in the world for which there is no lexicon nor grammar, it is that which a woman thinks in, but never speaks."

"It is all that is left of the language spoken in paradise," said Harley.

"In the dialogue between Eve and the serpent,—yes," quoth the incorrigible sage. "But who comes here?—our friend Leonard."

Leonard now entered the room; but Harley could scarcely greet him, before he was interrupted by the count.

"Milord," said Peschiera, beckoning him aside, "I have fulfilled my promise, and I will now leave your roof. Baron Levy returns to London, and offers me a seat in his carriage, which is already, I believe, at your door. The duke and his daughter will readily forgive me if I do not ceremoniously bid them farewell. In our altered positions, it does not become me too intrusively to claim kindred; it became me only to remove, as I trust I have done, a barrier against the claim. If you approve my conduct, you will state your own opinion to the duke." With a profound salutation the count turned to depart; nor did Harley attempt to stay him, but attended him down the stairs with polite formality.

"Remember only, my Lord, that I solicit nothing. I may allow myself to accept, — *voilà tout*." He bowed again, with the inimitable grace of the old *régime*, and stepped into the baron's travelling carriage.

Levy, who had lingered behind, paused to accost L'Estrange.

"Your Lordship will explain to Mr. Egerton how his adopted son deserved his esteem, and repaid his kindness. For the rest, though you have bought up the more pressing and immediate demands on Mr. Egerton, I fear that even your fortune will not enable you to clear those liabilities which will leave him, perhaps, a pauper!"

"Baron Levy," said Harley, abruptly, "if I have forgiven Mr. Egerton, cannot you too forgive? Me he has wronged; you have wronged him, and more foully."

"No, my Lord, I cannot forgive him. You he has never humiliated, you he has never employed for his wants, and scorned as his companion. You have never known what it is to start in life with one whose fortunes were equal to your own, whose talents were not superior. Look you, Lord L'Estrange, in spite of this difference between me and Egerton, that he has squandered the wealth that he gained without effort, while I have converted the follies of others into my own ample revenues, the spendthrift in his penury has the respect and position which millions cannot bestow upon me. You would say that I am an usurer, and he is a statesman. But do you know what I should have been, had I not been born the natural son of a peer? Can you guess what I should have been if Nora Avenel had been my wife? 'The blot on my birth, and the blight on my youth, and the knowledge that he who was rising every year into the rank which entitled him to reject me as a guest at his table — he whom the world called the model of a gentleman — was a coward and a liar to the friend of his youth,—all this made me look on the world with contempt; and, despising Audley Egerton, I yet hated him and envied. You, whom he wronged, stretch your hand as before to the great statesman; from my touch you would shrink as pollution. My Lord, you may forgive him whom you love and pity; I cannot forgive him whom I scorn and envy. Pardon my prolixity. I now quit your house."

The baron moved a step, then, turning back, said with a withering sneer, —

"But you will tell Mr. Egerton how I helped to expose the son he adopted! I thought of the childless man when your Lordship imagined I was but in fear of your threats. Ha! ha! that will sting."

The baron gnashed his teeth as, hastily entering the carriage, he drew down the blinds. The post-boys cracked their whips, and the wheels rolled away.

"Who can judge," thought Harley, "through what modes

retribution comes home to the breast? That man is chastised in his wealth, ever gnawed by desire for what his wealth cannot buy!" He roused himself, cleared his brow, as from a thought that darkened and troubled; and, entering the saloon, laid his hand upon Leonard's shoulder, and looked, rejoicing, into the poet's mild, honest, lustrous eyes. "Leonard," said he, gently, "your hour is come at last."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AUDLEY EGERTON was alone in his apartment. A heavy sleep had come over him, shortly after Harley and Randal had left the house in the early morning; and that sleep continued till late in the day. All the while the town of Lansmere had been distracted in his cause, all the while so many tumultuous passions had run riot in the contest that was to close or re-open for the statesman's ambition the Janus gates of political war, the object of so many fears and hopes, schemes and counter-schemes, had slumbered quietly as an infant in the cradle. He woke but in time to receive Harley's despatch, announcing the success of his election; and adding, "Before the night you shall embrace your son. Do not join us below when I return. Keep calm,—*we* will come to you."

In fact, though not aware of the dread nature of Audley's complaint, with its warning symptoms, Lord L'Estrange wished to spare to his friend the scene of Randal's exposure.

On the receipt of that letter Egerton rose. At the prospect of seeing his son—Nora's son—the very memory of his disease vanished. The poor, weary, over-laboured heart indeed beat loud, and with many a jerk and spasm. He heeded it not. The victory, that restored him to the sole life for which he had hitherto cared to live, was clean forgotten. Nature claimed her own,—claimed it in scorn of death, and in oblivion of renown.

There sat the man, dressed with his habitual precision,—the black coat, buttoned across the broad breast; his countenance, so mechanically habituated to self-control, still revealing little of emotion, though the sickly flush came and went on the bronzed cheek, and the eye watched the hand of the clock, and the ear hungered for a foot-tread along the corridor. At length the sound was heard,—steps, many steps. He sprung to his feet, he stood on the hearth. Was the hearth to be solitary no more? Harley entered first. Egerton's eyes rested on him eagerly for a moment, and strained onward across the threshold. Leonard came next,—Leonard Fairfield, whom he had seen as his opponent! He began to suspect, to conjecture, to see the mother's tender eyes in the son's manly face. Involuntarily he opened his arms; but, Leonard remaining still, let them fall with a deep sigh, and fancied himself deceived.

"Friend," said Harley, "I give to you a son proved in adversity, and who has fought his own way to fame. Leonard, in the man to whom I prayed you to sacrifice your own ambition, of whom you have spoken with such worthy praise, whose career of honour you have promoted, and whose life, unsatisfied by those honours, you will soothe with your filial love, behold the husband of Nora Avenel! Kneel to your father! O Audley, embrace your son!"

"Here, here!" exclaimed Egerton, as Leonard bent his knee,— "here to my heart! Look at me with those eyes!—kindly, forgivingly: they are your mother's!" His proud head sunk on his son's shoulder.

"But this is not enough," said Harley, leading Helen, and placing her by Leonard's side. "You must open your heart for more. Take into its folds my sweet ward and daughter. What is a home without the smile of woman? They have loved each other from children. Audley, yours be the hand to join,—yours be the lips to bless."

Leonard started anxiously. "Oh, sir!—oh, my father!—this generous sacrifice may not be; for he—he who has saved me for this surpassing joy—he too loves her!"

"Nay, Leonard," said Harley, smiling, "I am not so ne-

glectful of myself. Another home woos you, Audley. He whom you long so vainly sought to reconcile to life, exchanging mournful dreams for happy duties,—he, too, presents you to his bride. Love her for my sake,—for your own. She it is, not I, who presides over this hallowed reunion. But for her, I should have been a blinded, vindictive, guilty, repentant man; and —” Violante’s soft hand was on his lips.

“Thus,” said the parson, with mild solemnity, “man finds that the Saviour’s precepts, ‘Let not the sun go down upon thy wrath,’ and ‘Love one another,’ are clews that conduct us through the labyrinth of human life, when the schemes of fraud and hate snap asunder, and leave us lost amidst the maze.”

Egerton reared his head, as if to answer; and all present were struck and appalled by the sudden change that had come over his countenance. There was a film upon the eye, a shadow on the aspect; the words failed his lips; he sunk on the seat beside him. The left hand rested droopingly upon the piles of public papers and official documents, and the fingers played with them, as the bedridden dying sufferer plays with the coverlid he will soon exchange for the winding-sheet. But his right hand seemed to feel, as through the dark, for the recovered son; and having touched what it sought, feebly drew Leonard near and nearer. Alas! that blissful PRIVATE LIFE — that close centre round the core of being in the individual man — so long missed and pined for, slipped from him, as it were, the moment it reappeared; hurried away, as the circle on the ocean, which is scarce seen ere it vanishes amidst infinity. Suddenly both hands were still; the head fell back. Joy had burst asunder the last ligaments, so fretted away in unrevealing sorrow. Afar, their sound borne into that room, the joy-bells were pealing triumph; mobs roaring out huzzas; the weak cry of John Avenel might be blent in those shouts, as the drunken zealots reeled by his cottage door, and startled the screaming ravens that wheeled round the hollow oak. The boom which is sent from the waves on the surface of life, while the deeps are so noiseless in their march, was wafted on the wintry air into the chamber of the

statesman it honoured, and over the grass sighing low upon Nora's grave. But there was one in the chamber, as in the grave, for whom the boom on the wave had no sound, and the march of the deep had no tide. Amidst promises of home, and union, and peace, and fame, Death strode into the household ring, and, seating itself, calm and still, looked life-like, — warm hearts throbbing round it; lofty hopes fluttering upward; Love kneeling at its feet; Religion, with lifted finger, standing by its side.

FINAL CHAPTER.

SCENE — *The Hall in the Old Tower of* CAPTAIN ROLAND DE CAXTON.

"BUT you have not done?" said Augustine Caxton.

PISISTRATUS. — "What remains to do?"

MR. CAXTON. — "What! why, the *Final Chapter!* — the last news you can give us of those whom you have introduced to our liking or dislike."

PISISTRATUS. — "Surely it is more dramatic to close the work with a scene that completes the main design of the plot, and leave it to the prophetic imagination of all whose flattering curiosity is still not wholly satisfied, to trace the streams of each several existence, when they branch off again from the lake in which their waters converge, and by which the sibyl has confirmed and made clear the decree that 'Conduct is Fate.'"

MR. CAXTON. — "More dramatic, I grant; but you have not written a drama. A novelist should be a comfortable, garrulous, communicative, gossiping fortune-teller; not a grim, laconical, oracular sibyl. I like a novel that adopts all the old-fashioned customs prescribed to its art by the rules of the Masters, — more especially a novel which you style '*My Novel*' *par* emphasis."

CAPTAIN ROLAND. — “A most vague and impracticable title ‘My Novel’! It must really be changed before the work goes in due form to the public.”

MR. SQUILLS. — “Certainly the present title cannot be even pronounced by many without inflicting a shock upon their nervous system. Do you think, for instance, that my friend, Lady Priscilla Graves — who is a great novel-reader indeed, but holds all female writers unfeminine deserters to the standard of Man — could ever come out with, ‘Pray, sir, have you had time to look at — My Novel?’ — She would rather die first. And yet to be silent altogether on the latest acquisition to the circulating libraries would bring on a functional derangement of her ladyship’s organs of speech. Or how could pretty Miss Dulcet — all sentiment, it is true, but all bashful timidity — appall Captain Smirke from proposing with, ‘Did not you think the parson’s sermon a little too dry in My Novel?’ It will require a face of brass, or at least a long course of citrate of iron, before a respectable lady or unassuming young gentleman, with a proper dread of being taken for scribblers, could electrify a social circle with ‘The reviewers don’t do justice to the excellent things in — My Novel.’”

CAPTAIN ROLAND. — “Awful consequences, indeed, may arise from the mistakes such a title gives rise to. Counsellor Digwell, for instance, a lawyer of literary tastes, but whose career at the Bar was long delayed by an unjust suspicion amongst the attorneys that he had written a ‘Philosophical Essay’ — imagine such a man excusing himself for being late at a dinner of bigwigs, with ‘I could not get away from — My Novel!’ It would be his professional ruin! I am not fond of lawyers in general, but still I would not be a party to taking the bread out of the mouth of those with a family; and Digwell has children, — the tenth an innocent baby in arms.”

MR. CAXTON. — “As to Digwell in particular, and lawyers in general, they are too accustomed to circumlocution to expose themselves to the danger your kind heart apprehends; but I allow that a shy scholar like myself, or a grave college tutor, might be a little put to the blush, if he were to blurt

forth inadvertently with, 'Don't waste your time over trash like — MY NOVEL.' And that thought presents to us another and more pleasing view of this critical question. The title you condemn places the work under universal protection. Lives there a man or a woman so dead to self-love as to say, 'What contemptible stuff is — MY NOVEL?' Would he or she not rather be impelled by that strong impulse of an honourable and virtuous heart, which moves us to stand as well as we can with our friends, to say, 'Allow that there is really a good thing now and then in — MY NOVEL.' Moreover, as a novel aspires to embrace most of the interests or the passions that agitate mankind,—to generalize, as it were, the details of life that come home to us all,—so, in reality, the title denotes that if it be such as the author may not unworthily call his NOVEL, it must also be such as the reader, whoever he be, may appropriate in part to himself, representing his own ideas, expressing his own experience, reflecting, if not in full, at least in profile, his own personal identity. Thus, when we glance at the looking-glass in another man's room, our likeness for the moment appropriates the mirror; and according to the humour in which we are, or the state of our spirits and health, we say to ourselves, 'Bilious and yellow!—I might as well take care of my diet!' Or, 'Well, I've half a mind to propose to dear Jane; I'm not such an ill-looking dog as I thought for!' Still, whatever result from that glance at the mirror, we never doubt that 't is our likeness we see; and each says to the phantom reflection, 'Thou art myself,' though the mere article of furniture that gives the reflection belongs to another. It is my likeness if it be his glass. And a narrative that is true to the Varieties of Life is every Man's NOVEL, no matter from what shores, by what rivers, by what bays, in what pits, were extracted the sands and the silex, the pearlash, the nitre, and quicksilver which form its materials; no matter who the craftsman who fashioned its form; no matter who the vendor that sold, or the customer who bought: still, if I but recognize some trait of myself, 't is my likeness that makes it 'MY NOVEL.' "

MR. SQUILLS (puzzled, and therefore admiring). — "Subtle,

sir,—very subtle. Fine organ of Comparison in Mr. Caxton's head, and much called into play this evening!"

MR. CAXTON (benignly). — "Finally, the author by this most admirable and much signifying title dispenses with all necessity of preface. He need insinuate no merits, he need extenuate no faults; for, by calling his work thus curtly 'My Novel,' he doth delicately imply that it is no use wasting talk about faults or merits."

PISISTRATUS (amazed). — "How is that, sir?"

MR. CAXTON. — "What so clear? You imply that, though a better novel may be written by others, you do not expect to write a novel to which, taken as a novel, you would more decisively and unblushingly prefix that voucher of personal authorship and identity conveyed in the monosyllable 'My.' And if you have written your best, let it be ever so bad, what can any man of candour and integrity require more from you? Perhaps you will say that, if you had lived two thousand years ago, you might have called it 'The Novel,' or the 'Golden Novel,' as Lucius called his story 'The Ass;' and Apuleius, to distinguish his own more elaborate Ass from all Asses preceding it, called his tale 'The Golden Ass.' But living in the present day, such a designation — implying a merit in general, not the partial and limited merit corresponding only with your individual abilities — would be presumptuous and offensive. True, I here anticipate the observation I see Squills is about to make —"

SQUILLS. — "I, sir?"

MR. CAXTON. — "You would say that, as Scarron called his work of fiction 'The Comic Novel,' so Pisistratus might have called his 'The Serious Novel,' or 'The Tragic Novel.' But, Squills, that title would not have been inviting nor appropriate, and would have been exposed to comparison with Scarron, who being dead is inimitable. Wherefore — to put the question on the irrefragable basis of mathematics — wherefore as A B 'My Novel' is not equal to B C 'The Golden Novel,' nor to D E 'The Serious or Tragic Novel,' it follows that A B 'My Novel' is equal to P C 'Pisistratus Caxton,' and P C 'Pisistratus Caxton' must therefore be just equal, neither

more nor less, to A B 'My Novel,' — which was to be demonstrated." My father looked round triumphantly, and observing that Squills was dumfounded, and the rest of his audience posed, he added mildly,—

"And so now, 'non qujeta movere,' proceed with the Final Chapter, and tell us first what became of that youthful Giles Overreach, who was himself his own Marrall?"

"Ay," said the captain, "what became of Randal Leslie? Did he repent and reform?"

"Nay," quoth my father, with a mournful shake of the head, "you can regulate the warm tide of wild passion, you can light into virtue the dark errors of ignorance; but where the force of the brain does but clog the free action of the heart, where you have to deal, not with ignorance misled, but intelligence corrupted, small hope of reform; for reform here will need re-organization. I have somewhere read (perhaps in Hebrew tradition) that of the two orders of fallen spirits,—the Angels of Love and the Angels of Knowledge,—the first missed the stars they had lost, and wandered back through the darkness, one by one, into heaven; but the last, lighted on by their own lurid splendours, said, 'Wherever *we* go, there is heaven!' And deeper and lower descending, lost their shape and their nature, till, deformed and obscene, the bottomless pit closed around them."

MR. SQUILLS. — "I should not have thought, Mr. Caxton, that a book-man like you would be thus severe upon Knowledge."

MR. CAXTON (in wrath). — "Severe upon knowledge! Oh, Squills, Squills, Squills! Knowledge perverted is knowledge no longer. Vinegar, which, exposed to the sun, breeds small serpents, or at best slimy eels, not comestible, once was wine. If I say to my grandchildren, 'Don't drink that sour stuff, which the sun itself fills with reptiles,' does that prove me a foe to sound sherry? Squills, if you had but received a scholastic education, you would know the wise maxim that saith, 'All things the worst are corruptions from things originally designed as the best.' Has not freedom bred anarchy, and religion fanaticism? And if I blame Marat calling for

blood, or Dominic racking a heretic, am I severe on the religion that canonized Francis de Sales, or the freedom that immortalized Thrasybulus?"

Mr. Squills, dreading a catalogue of all the saints in the calendar, and an epitome of Ancient History, exclaimed eagerly, "Enough, sir; I am convinced!"

MR. CAXTON. — "Moreover, I have thought it a natural stroke of art in Pisistratus to keep Randal Leslie, in his progress towards the rot of the intellect unwholesomely refined, free from all the salutary influences that deter ambition from settling into egotism. Neither in his slovenly home, nor from his classic tutor at his preparatory school, does he seem to have learned any truths, religious or moral, that might give sap to fresh shoots, when the first rank growth was cut down by the knife; and I especially noted, as illustrative of Egerton, no less than of Randal, that though the statesman's occasional hints of advice to his *protégé* are worldly wise in their way, and suggestive of honour as befitting the creed of a gentleman, they are not such as much influence a shrewd reasoner like Randal, whom the example of the playground at Eton had not served to correct of the arid self-seeking, which looked to knowledge for no object but power. A man tempted by passions like Audley, or seduced into fraud by a cold, subtle spirit like Leslie, will find poor defence in the elegant precept, 'Remember to act as a gentleman.' Such moral embroidery adds a beautiful scarf to one's armour; but it is not the armour itself! Ten o'clock, as I live! Push on, Pisistratus! and finish the chapter."

MRS. CAXTON (benevolently). — "Don't hurry. Begin with that odious Randal Leslie, to oblige your father; but there are others whom Blanche and I care much more to hear about."

Pisistratus, since there is no help for it, produces a supplementary manuscript, which proves that, whatever his doubt as to the artistic effect of a Final Chapter, he had foreseen that his audience would not be contented without one.

Randal Leslie, late at noon the day after he quitted Lansmere Park, arrived on foot at his father's house. He had

walked all the way, and through the solitudes of the winter night; but he was not sensible of fatigue till the dismal home closed round him, with its air of hopeless ignoble poverty; and then he sunk upon the floor feeling himself a ruin amidst the ruins. He made no disclosure of what had passed to his relations. Miserable man, there was not one to whom he could confide, or from whom he might hear the truths that connect repentance with consolation! After some weeks passed in sullen and almost unbroken silence, he left as abruptly as he had appeared, and returned to London. The sudden death of a man like Egerton had even in those excited times created intense, though brief sensation. The particulars of the election, that had been given in detail in the provincial papers, were copied into the London journals,—among those details, Randal Leslie's conduct in the Committee-room, with many an indignant comment on selfishness and ingratitude. The political world of all parties formed one of those judgments on the great man's poor dependant, which fix a stain upon the character and place a barrier in the career of ambitious youth. The important personages who had once noticed Randal for Audley's sake, and who, on their subsequent and not long-deferred restoration to power, could have made his fortune, passed him in the streets without a nod. He did not venture to remind Avenel of the promise to aid him in another election for Lansmere, nor dream of filling up the vacancy which Egerton's death had created. He was too shrewd not to see that all hope of that borough was over,—he would have been hooted in the streets and pelted from the hustings. Forlorn in the vast metropolis as Leonard had once been, in his turn he loitered on the bridge, and gazed on the remorseless river. He had neither money nor connections,—nothing save talents and knowledge to force his way back into the lofty world in which all had smiled on him before; and talents and knowledge, that had been exerted to injure a benefactor, made him but the more despised. But even now, Fortune, that had bestowed on the pauper heir of Rood advantages so numerous and so dazzling, out of which he had cheated himself, gave him

a chance, at least, of present independence, by which, with patient toil, he might have won, if not to the highest places, at least to a position in which he could have forced the world to listen to his explanations, and perhaps receive his excuses. The £ 5,000 that Audley designed for him, and which, in a private memorandum, the statesman had entreated Harley to see safely rescued from the fangs of the law, were made over to Randal by Lord L'Estrange's solicitor; but this sum seemed to him so small after the loss of such gorgeous hopes, and the up-hill path seemed so slow after such short cuts to power, that Randal looked upon the unexpected bequest simply as an apology for adopting no profession. Stung to the quick by the contrast between his past and his present place in the English world, he hastened abroad. There, whether in distraction from thought, or from the curiosity of a restless intellect to explore the worth of things yet untried, Randal Leslie, who had hitherto been so dead to the ordinary amusements of youth, plunged into the society of damaged gamesters and third-rate *roués*. In this companionship his very talents gradually degenerated, and their exercise upon low intrigues and miserable projects but abased his social character, till, sinking step after step as his funds decayed, he finally vanished out of the sphere in which even profligates still retain the habits, and cling to the *caste* of gentlemen. His father died; the neglected property of Rood devolved on Randal, but out of its scanty proceeds he had to pay the portions of his brother and sister, and his mother's jointure; the surplus left was scarcely visible in the executor's account. The hope of restoring the home and fortunes of his forefathers had long ceased. What were the ruined hall and its bleak wastes, without that hope which had once dignified the wreck and the desert? He wrote from St. Petersburg, ordering the sale of the property. No one great proprietor was a candidate for the unpromising investment; it was sold in lots among small freeholders and retired traders. A builder bought the hall for its material. Hall, lands, and name were blotted out of the map and the history of the county.

The widow, Oliver, and Juliet removed to a provincial

town in another shire. Juliet married an ensign in a marching regiment, and died of neglect after childbirth. Mrs. Leslie did not long survive her. Oliver added to his little fortune by marriage with the daughter of a retail tradesman, who had amassed a few thousand pounds. He set up a brewery, and contrived to live without debt, though a large family and his own constitutional inertness extracted from his business small profits and no savings. Nothing of Randal had been heard of for years after the sale of Rood, except that he had taken up his residence either in Australia or the United States; it was not known which, but presumed to be the latter. Still, Oliver had been brought up with so high a veneration of his brother's talents, that he cherished the sanguine belief that Randal would some day appear, wealthy and potent, like the uncle in a comedy; lift up the sunken family, and rear into graceful ladies and accomplished gentlemen the clumsy little boys and the vulgar little girls who now crowded round Oliver's dinner-table, with appetites altogether disproportioned to the size of the joints.

One winter day, when from the said dinner-table wife and children had retired, and Oliver sat sipping his half-pint of bad port, and looking over unsatisfactory accounts, a thin terrier, lying on the threadbare rug by the niggard fire, sprang up and barked fiercely. Oliver lifted his dull blue eyes, and saw opposite to him, at the window, a human face. The face was pressed close to the panes, and was obscured by the haze which the breath of its lips drew forth from the frosty rime that had gathered on the glass.

Oliver, alarmed and indignant, supposing this intrusive spectator of his privacy to be some bold and lawless tramper, stepped out of the room, opened the front door, and bade the stranger go about his business; while the terrier still more inhospitably yelped and snapped at the stranger's heels. Then a hoarse voice said, "Don't you know me, Oliver? I am your brother Randal! Call away your dog and let me in." Oliver stared aghast; he could not believe his slow senses, he could not recognize his brother in the gaunt grim apparition before him; but at length he came forward, gazed

into Randal's face, and, grasping his hand in amazed silence, led him into the little parlour. Not a trace of the well-bred refinement which had once characterized Randal's air and person was visible. His dress bespoke the last stage of that terrible decay which is significantly called the "shabby genteel." His mien was that of the skulking, timorous, famished vagabond. As he took off his greasy tattered hat, he exhibited, though still young in years, the signs of premature old age. His hair, once so fine and silken, was of a harsh iron-gray, bald in ragged patches; his forehead and visage were ploughed into furrows; intelligence was still in the aspect, but an intelligence that instinctively set you on your guard,—sinister, gloomy, menacing.

Randal stopped short all questioning. He seized the small modicum of wine on the table, and drained it at a draught. "Pooh," said he, "have you nothing that warms a man better than this?" Oliver, who felt as if under the influence of a frightful dream, went to a cupboard and took out a bottle of brandy three-parts full. Randal snatched at it eagerly, and put his lips to the mouth of the bottle. "Ah," said he, after a short pause, "this comforts; now give me food." Oliver hastened himself to serve his brother; in fact, he felt ashamed that even the slipshod maid-servant should see his visitor. When he returned with such provisions as he could extract from the larder, Randal was seated by the fire, spreading over the embers emaciated bony hands, like the talons of a vulture.

He devoured the cold meat set before him with terrible voracity, and nearly finished the spirits left in the bottle; but the last had no effect in dispersing his gloom. Oliver stared at him in fear; the terrier continued to utter a low suspicious growl.

"You would know my history?" at length said Randal, bluntly. "It is short. I have tried for fortune and failed,—I am without a penny and without a hope. You seem poor,—I suppose you cannot much help me. Let me at least stay with you for a time,—I know not where else to look for bread and for shelter."

Oliver burst into tears, and cordially bade his brother welcome. Randal remained some weeks at Oliver's house, never stirring out of the doors, and not seeming to notice, though he did not scruple to use, the new habiliments, which Oliver procured ready-made, and placed, without remark, in his room. But his presence soon became intolerable to the mistress of the house, and oppressive even to its master. Randal, who had once been so abstemious that he had even regarded the most moderate use of wine as incompatible with clear judgment and vigilant observation, had contracted the habit of drinking spirits at all hours of the day; but though they sometimes intoxicated him into stupor, they never unlocked his heart nor enlivened his sullen mood. If he observed less acutely than of old, he could still conceal just as closely. Mrs. Oliver Leslie, at first rather awed and taciturn, grew cold and repelling, then pert and sarcastic, at last undisguisedly and vulgarly rude. Randal made no retort; but his sneer was so galling that the wife flew at once to her husband, and declared that either she or his brother must leave the house. Oliver tried to pacify and compromise, with partial success; and a few days afterwards, he came to Randal and said timidly, "You see, my wife brought me nearly all I possess, and you don't condescend to make friends with her. Your residence here must be as painful to you as to me. But I wish to see you provided for; and I could offer you something, only it seems, at first glance, so beneath —"

"Beneath what?" interrupted Randal, witheringly. "What I was — or what I am? Speak out!"

"To be sure you are a scholar; and I have heard you say fine things about knowledge and so forth; and you'll have plenty of books at your disposal, no doubt; and you are still young, and may rise — and —"

"Hell and torments! Be quick, — say the worst or the best!" cried Randal, fiercely.

"Well, then," said poor Oliver, still trying to soften the intended proposal, "you must know that our poor sister's husband was nephew to Dr. Felpem, who keeps a very respectable school. He is not learned himself, and attends

chiefly to arithmetic and book-keeping, and such matters; but he wants an usher to teach the classics, for some of the boys go to college. And I have written to him, just to sound — I did not mention your name till I knew if you would like it; but he will take my recommendation. Board, lodging, £ 50 a year; in short, the place is yours if you like it.”

Randal shivered from head to foot, and was long before he answered. “Well, be it so; I have come to that. Ha, ha! yes, knowledge is power!” He paused a few moments. “So, the old Hall is razed to the ground, and you are a tradesman in a small country town, and my sister is dead, and I henceforth am — John Smith! You say that you did not mention my name to the schoolmaster,—still keep it concealed; forget that I once was a Leslie. Our tie of brotherhood ceases when I go from your hearth. Write, then, to your head-master, who attends to arithmetic, and secure the rank of his usher in Latin and Greek for — John Smith!”

Not many days afterwards, the *protégé* of Audley Egerton entered on his duties as usher in one of those large, cheap schools, which comprise a sprinkling of the sons of gentry and clergymen designed for the learned professions, with a far larger proportion of the sons of traders, intended, some for the counting-house, some for the shop and the till. There, to this day, under the name of John Smith, lives Randal Leslie.

It is probably not pride alone that induces him to persist in that change of name, and makes him regard as perpetual the abandonment of the one that he took from his forefathers, and with which he had once identified his vaulting ambition; for shortly after he had quitted his brother’s house, Oliver read in the weekly newspaper, to which he bounded his lore of the times in which he lived, an extract from an American journal, wherein certain mention was made of an English adventurer who, amongst other aliases, had assumed the name of Leslie,—that extract caused Oliver to start, turn pale, look round, and thrust the paper into the fire. From that time he never attempted to violate the condition Randal had

imposed on him, never sought to renew their intercourse, nor to claim a brother. Doubtless, if the adventurer thus signalized was the man Oliver suspected, whatever might be imputed to Randal's charge that could have paled a brother's cheek, it was none of the more violent crimes to which law is inexorable, but rather (in that progress made by ingratitude and duplicity, with Need and Necessity urging them on) some act of dishonesty which may just escape from the law, to sink, without redemption, the name. However this be, there is nothing in Randal's present course of life which forbodes any deeper fall. He has known what it is to want bread, and his former restlessness subsides into cynic apathy.

He lodges in the town near the school, and thus the debasing habit of unsocial besotment is not brought under the eyes of his superior. The dram is his sole luxury; if it be suspected, it is thought to be his sole vice. He goes through the ordinary routine of tuition with average credit; his spirit of intrigue occasionally shows itself in attempts to conciliate the favour of the boys whose fathers are wealthy, who are born to higher rank than the rest; and he lays complicated schemes to be asked home for the holidays. But when the schemes succeed, and the invitation comes, he recoils and shrinks back,—he does not dare to show himself on the borders of the brighter world he once hoped to sway; he fears that he may be discovered to be — a Leslie! On such days, when his taskwork is over, he shuts himself up in his room, locks the door, and drugs himself into insensibility.

Once he found a well-worn volume running the round of delighted schoolboys, took it up, and recognized Leonard's earliest popular work, which had, many years before, seduced himself into pleasant thoughts and gentle emotions. He carried the book to his own lodgings, read it again; and when he returned it to its young owner, some of the leaves were stained with tears. Alas! perhaps but the maudlin tears of broken nerves, not of the awakened soul,—for the leaves smelt strongly of whiskey. Yet, after that re-perusal, Randal Leslie turned suddenly to deeper studies than his habitual drudgeries required. He revived and increased his early

scholarship; he chalked the outline of a work of great erudition, in which the subtlety of his intellect found field in learned and acute criticism. But he has never proceeded far in this work. After each irregular and spasmodic effort, the pen drops from his hand, and he mutters, "But to what end? I can never *now* raise a name. Why give reputation to — John Smith?"

Thus he drags on his life; and perhaps, when he dies, the fragments of his learned work may be discovered in the desk of the usher, and serve as hints to some crafty student, who may filch ideas and repute from the dead Leslie, as Leslie had filched them from the living Burley.

While what may be called poetical justice has thus evolved itself from the schemes in which Randal Leslie had wasted rare intellect in baffling his own fortunes, no outward signs of adversity evince the punishment of Providence on the head of the more powerful offender, Baron Levy. No fall in the Funds has shaken the sumptuous fabric, built from the ruined houses of other men. Baron Levy is still Baron Levy the millionaire; but I doubt if at heart he be not more acutely miserable than Randal Leslie the usher. For Levy is a man who has admitted the fiercer passions into his philosophy of life; he has not the pale blood and torpid heart which allow the scotched adder to dose away its sense of pain. Just as old age began to creep upon the fashionable usurer, he fell in love with a young opera-dancer, whose light heels had turned the lighter heads of half the *élégans* of Paris and London. The craft of the dancer was proof against all lesser bribes than that of marriage; and Levy married her. From that moment his house, *Louis Quinze*, was more crowded than ever by the high-born dandies whose society he had long so eagerly courted. That society became his curse. The baroness was an accomplished coquette; and Levy (with whom, as we have seen, jealousy was the predominant passion) was stretched on an eternal rack. His low estimate of human nature, his disbelief in the possibility of virtue, added strength to the agony of his suspicions, and provoked the very dangers he dreaded. His self-torturing task was that

of the spy upon his own hearth. His banquets were haunted by a spectre; the attributes of his wealth were as the goad and the scourge of Nemesis. His gay cynic smile changed into a sullen scowl, his hair blanched into white, his eyes were hollow with one consuming care. Suddenly he left his costly house,—left London; abjured all the society which it had been the joy of his wealth to purchase; buried himself and his wife in a remote corner of the provinces; and there he still lives. He seeks in vain to occupy his days with rural pursuits,—he to whom the excitements of a metropolis, with all its corruption and its vices, were the sole sources of the turpid stream that he called “pleasure.” There, too, the fiend of jealousy still pursues him: he prowls round his demesnes with the haggard eye and furtive step of a thief; he guards his wife as a prisoner, for she threatens every day to escape. The life of the man who had opened the prison to so many is the life of a jailer. His wife abhors him, and does not conceal it; and still slavishly he dotes on her. Accustomed to the freest liberty, demanding applause and admiration as her rights; wholly uneducated, vulgar in mind, coarse in language, violent in temper, the beautiful Fury he had brought to his home makes that home a hell. Thus, what might seem to the superficial most enviable, is to their possessor most hateful. He dares not ask a soul to see how he spends his gold; he has shrunk into a mean and niggardly expenditure, and complains of reverse and poverty, in order to excuse himself to his wife for debarring her the enjoyments which she anticipated from the Money Bags she had married. A vague consciousness of retribution has awakened remorse, to add to his other stings. And the remorse coming from superstition, not religion (sent from below, not descending from above), brings with it none of the consolations of a genuine repentance. He never seeks to atone, never dreams of some redeeming good action. His riches flow around him, spreading wider and wider — out of his own reach.

The Count di Peschiera was not deceived in the calculations which had induced him to affect repentance, and establish a claim upon his kinsman. He received from the

generosity of the Duke di Serrano an annuity not disproportioned to his rank, and no order from his court forbade his return to Vienna. But, in the very summer that followed his visit to Lansmere, his career came to an abrupt close. At Baden-Baden he paid court to a wealthy and accomplished Polish widow; and his fine person and terrible repute awed away all rivals, save a young Frenchman, as daring as himself, and much more in love. A challenge was given and accepted. Peschiera appeared on the fatal ground, with his customary *sang-froid*, humming an opera air, and looking so diabolically gay that his opponent's nerves were affected in spite of his courage; and the Frenchman's trigger going off before he had even taken aim, to his own ineffable astonishment, he shot the count through the heart, dead.

Beatrice di Negra lived for some years after her brother's death in strict seclusion, lodging within a convent, though she did not take the veil, as she at first proposed. In fact, the more she saw of the sisterhood, the more she found that human regrets and human passions (save in some rarely gifted natures) find their way through the barred gates and over the lofty walls. Finally, she took up her abode in Rome, where she is esteemed for a life not only marked by strict propriety, but active benevolence. She cannot be prevailed on to accept from the duke more than a fourth of the annuity that had been bestowed on her brother; but she has few wants, save those of charity; and when charity is really active, it can do so much with so little gold! She is not known in the gayer circles of the city; but she gathers round her a small society composed chiefly of artists and scholars, and is never so happy as when she can aid some child of genius,—more especially if his country be England.

The squire and his wife still flourish at Hazeldean, where Captain Barnabas Higginbotham has taken up his permanent abode. The captain is a confirmed hypochondriac; but he brightens up now and then when he hears of any illness in the family of Mr. Sharpe Currie, and, at such times, is heard to murmur, "If those seven sickly children should go off, I might still have very great — EXPECTATIONS," — for the

which he has been roundly scolded by the squire, and gravely preached at by the parson. Upon both, however, he takes his revenge in a fair and gentlemanlike way, three times a week, at the whist-table, the parson no longer having the captain as his constant partner, since a fifth now generally cuts in at the table,—in the person of that old enemy and neighbour, Mr. Sticktorights. The parson, thus fighting his own battles unallied to the captain, observes with melancholy surprise that there is a long run of luck against him, and that he does not win so much as he used to do. Fortunately that is the sole trouble—except Mrs. Dale's "little tempers," to which he is accustomed—that ever disturbs the serene tenor of the parson's life. We must now explain how Mr. Sticktorights came to cut in at the Hazeldean whist-table. Frank has settled at the Casino with a wife who suits him exactly, and that wife was Miss Sticktorights. It was two years before Frank recovered the disappointment with which the loss of Beatrice saddened his spirits, but sobered his habits and awoke his reflection. An affection, however misplaced and ill-requited, if honestly conceived and deeply felt, rarely fails to advance the self-education of man. Frank became steady and serious; and, on a visit to Hazeldean, met at a county ball Miss Sticktorights, and the two young persons were instantly attracted towards each other, perhaps by the very feud that had so long existed between their houses. The marriage settlements were nearly abandoned, at the last moment, by a discussion between the parents as to the Right of Way; but the dispute was happily appeased by Mr. Dale's suggestion that as both properties would be united in the children of the proposed marriage, all cause for litigation would naturally cease, since no man would go to law with himself. Mr. Sticktorights and Mr. Hazeldean, however, agreed in the precaution of inserting a clause in the settlements (though all the lawyers declared that it could not be of any legal avail), by which it was declared, that if, in default of heritable issue by the said marriage, the Sticktorights' estate devolved on some distant scion of the Sticktorights family, the right of way from the wood across the waste land would still remain

in the same state of delectable dispute in which it then stood. There seems, however, little chance of a lawsuit thus providently bequeathed to the misery of distant generations, since two sons and two daughters are already playing at hide-and-seek on the terrace where Jackeymo once watered the orange-trees, and in the belvidere where Riccabocca had studied his Machiavelli.

Jackeymo, though his master has assessed the long arrears of his wages at a sum which would enable him to have orange-groves and servants of his own, still clings to his former duties, and practises his constitutional parsimony. His only apparent deviation into profusion consists in the erection of a chapel to his sainted namesake, to whom he burns many a votive taper,—the tapers are especially tall, and their sconces are wreathed with garlands, whenever a letter with the foreign postmark brings good news of the absent Violante and her English lord.

Riccabocca was long before he reconciled himself to the pomp of his principalities and his title of Duke. Jemima accommodated herself much more readily to greatness; but she retained all her native Hazeldean simplicity at heart, and is adored by the villagers around her, especially by the young of both sexes, whom she is always ready to marry and to portion,—convinced, long ere this, of the redeemable qualities of the male sex by her reverence for the duke, who continues to satirize women and wedlock, and deem himself—thanks to his profound experience of the one, and his philosophical endurance of the other—the only happy husband in the world. Longer still was it before the sage, who had been so wisely anxious to rid himself of the charge of a daughter, could wean his thoughts from the remembrance of her tender voice and loving eyes,—not, indeed, till he seriously betook himself to the task of educating the son with whom, according to his scientific prognostics, Jemima presented him shortly after his return to his native land. The sage began betimes with his Italian proverbs, full of hard-hearted worldly wisdom, and the boy was scarce out of the hornbook before he was introduced to Machiavelli. But

somehow or other the simple goodness of the philosopher's actual life, with his high-wrought patrician sentiments of integrity and honour, so counteract the theoretical lessons, that the Heir of Serrano is little likely to be made more wise by the proverbs, or more wicked by the Machiavelli, than those studies have practically made the progenitor, whose opinions his countrymen still shame with the title of "Alphonso the Good."

The duke long cherished a strong curiosity to know what had become of Randal. He never traced the adventurer to his closing scene. But once (years before Randal had crept into his present shelter) in a visit of inspection to the hospital at Genoa, the duke, with his peculiar shrewdness of observation in all matters except those which concerned himself, was remarking to the officer in attendance, "that for one dull, honest man whom fortune drove to the hospital or the jail, he had found, on investigation of their antecedents, three sharp-witted knaves who had thereto reduced themselves" — when his eye fell upon a man asleep in one of the sick wards; and recognizing the face, not then so changed as Oliver had seen it, he walked straight up, and gazed upon Randal Leslie.

"An Englishman," said the official. "He was brought hither insensible, from a severe wound on the head, inflicted, as we discovered, by a well-known *chevalier d'industrie*, who declared that the Englishman had outwitted and cheated him. That was not very likely, for a few crowns were all we could find on the Englishman's person, and he had been obliged to leave his lodgings for debt. He is recovering, but there is fever still."

The duke gazed silently on the sleeper, who was tossing restlessly on his pallet, and muttering to himself; then he placed his purse in the official's hand. "Give this to the Englishman," said he; "but conceal my name. It is true, it is true, the proverb is very true," resumed the duke, descending the stairs, "*Più pelli di volpi che di asini vanno in Pellicciaria.*" (More hides of foxes than of asses find their way to the tanner's).

Dr. Morgan continues to prescribe globules for grief, and to administer infinitesimally to a mind diseased. Practising what he prescribes, he swallows a globule of *caustic* whenever the sight of a distressed fellow-creature moves him to compassion,—a constitutional tendency which, he is at last convinced, admits of no radical cure. For the rest, his range of patients has notably expanded; and under his sage care his patients unquestionably live as long — as Providence pleases. No allopathist can say more.

The death of poor John Burley found due place in the obituary of “literary men.” Admirers, unknown before, came forward and subscribed for a handsome monument to his memory in Kensall Green. They would have subscribed for the relief of his widow and children, if he had left any. Writers in magazines thrived for some months on collections of his humorous sayings, anecdotes of his eccentricities, and specimens of the eloquence that had lightened through the tobacco-reek of tavern and club-room. Leonard ultimately made a selection from his scattered writings which found place in standard libraries, though their subjects were either of too fugitive an interest, or treated in too capricious a manner, to do more than indicate the value of the ore, had it been purified from its dross and subjected to the art of the mint. These specimens could not maintain their circulation as the coined money of Thought, but they were hoarded by collectors as rare curiosities. Alas, poor Burley!

The Pompleys sustained a pecuniary loss by the crash of a railway company, in which the colonel had been induced to take several shares by one of his wife’s most boasted “connections,” whose estate the said railway proposed to traverse, on paying £400 an acre, in that golden age when railway companies respected the rights of property. The colonel was no longer able, in his own country, to make both ends meet at Christmas. He is now straining hard to achieve that feat in Boulogne, and has in the process grown so red in the face, that those who meet him in his morning walk on the pier, bargaining for fish, shake their heads and say, “Old Pompley will go off in a fit of apoplexy; a great loss to society; genteel people the Pompleys! and very highly ‘connected.’”

The vacancy created in the borough of Lansmere by Audley Egerton's death was filled up by our old acquaintance, Haveril Dashmore, who had unsuccessfully contested that seat on Egerton's first election. The naval officer was now an admiral, and perfectly reconciled to the Constitution, with all its alloy of aristocracy.

Dick Avenel did not retire from parliament so soon as he had anticipated. He was not able to persuade Leonard, whose brief fever of political ambition was now quenched in the calm fountain of the Muse, to supply his place in the senate, and he felt that the House of Avenel needed one representative. He contrived, however, to devote, for the first year or two, much more of his time to his interests at Screws-town than to the affairs of his country, and succeeded in baffling the over-competition to which he had been subjected by taking the competitor into partnership. Having thus secured a monopoly at Screwstown, Dick, of course, returned with great ardour to his former enlightened opinions in favour of free trade. He remained some years in parliament; and though far too shrewd to venture out of his depth as an orator, distinguished himself so much by his exposure of "humbug" on an important Committee, that he acquired a very high reputation as a man of business, and gradually became so in request amongst all the members who moved for "Select Committees," that he rose into consequence; and Mrs. Avenel, courted for his sake, more than her own, obtained the wish of her heart, and was received as an acknowledged *habituée* into the circles of fashion. Amidst these circles, however, Dick found that his home entirely vanished; and when he came home from the House of Commons, tired to death, at two in the morning, disgusted at always hearing that Mrs. Avenel was not yet returned from some fine lady's ball, he formed a sudden resolution of cutting Parliament, Fashion, and London altogether; withdrew his capital, now very large, from his business; bought the remaining estates of Squire Thornhill; and his chief object of ambition is in endeavouring to coax or bully out of their holdings all the small freeholders round, who had subdivided amongst them, into poles and fur-

longs, the fated inheritance of Randal Leslie. An excellent justice of the peace, though more severe than your old family proprietors generally are; a spirited landlord, as to encouraging and making, at a proper percentage, all permanent improvements on the soil, but formidable to meet if the rent be not paid to the day, or the least breach of covenant be heedlessly incurred on a farm that he could let for more money; employing a great many hands in productive labour, but exacting rigorously from all the utmost degree of work at the smallest rate of wages which competition and the poor-rate permit; the young and robust in his neighbourhood never stinted in work, and the aged and infirm, as lumber worn out, stowed away in the workhouse,—Richard Avenel holds himself an example to the old race of landlords; and, taken altogether, he is no very bad specimen of the rural civilizers whom the application of spirit and capital raise up in the new.

From the wrecks of Egerton's fortune, Harley, with the aid of his father's experience in business, could not succeed in saving, for the statesman's sole child and heir, more than a few thousand pounds; and but for the bonds and bills which, when meditating revenge, he had bought from Levy, and afterwards thrown into the fire — paying dear for that detestable whistle — even this surplus would not have been forthcoming.

Harley privately paid out of his own fortune the £ 5,000 Egerton had bequeathed to Leslie; perhaps not sorry, now that the stern duty of exposing the false wiles of the schemer was fulfilled, to afford some compensation even to the victim who had so richly deserved his fate; and pleased, though mournfully, to comply with the solemn request of the friend whose offence was forgotten in the remorseful memory of his own projects of revenge.

Leonard's birth and identity were easily proved, and no one appeared to dispute them. The balance due to him as his father's heir, together with the sum Avenel ultimately paid to him for the patent of his invention, and the dowry which Harley insisted upon bestowing on Helen, amounted

to that happy competence which escapes alike the anxieties of poverty, and (what to one of contemplative tastes and retired habits are often more irksome to bear) the show and responsibilities of wealth. His father's death made a deep impression upon Leonard's mind; but the discovery that he owed his birth to a statesman of so great a repute, and occupying a position in society so conspicuous, contributed not to confirm, but to still, the ambition which had for a short time diverted him from his more serene aspirations. He had no longer to win a rank which might equal Helen's. He had no longer a parent, whose affections might be best won through pride. The memories of his earlier peasant life, and his love for retirement,—in which habit confirmed the constitutional tendency,—made him shrink from what a more worldly nature would have considered the enviable advantages of a name that secured the entrance into the loftiest sphere of our social world. He wanted not that name to assist his own path to a rank far more durable than that which kings can confer. And still he retained in the works he had published, and still he proposed to bestow on the works more ambitious than he had, in leisure and competence, the facilities to design with care, and complete with patience, the name he had himself invented, and linked with the memory of the low-born mother. Therefore, though there was some wonder, in drawing-rooms and clubs, at the news of Egerton's first unacknowledged marriage, and some curiosity expressed as to what the son of that marriage might do, — and great men were prepared to welcome, and fine ladies to invite and bring out, the heir to the statesman's grave repute,—yet wonder and curiosity soon died away; the repute soon passed out of date, and its heir was soon forgotten. Politicians who fall short of the highest renown are like actors; no applause is so vivid while they are on the stage, no oblivion so complete when the curtain falls on the last farewell.

Leonard saw a fair tomb rise above Nora's grave, and on the tomb was engraved the word of WIFE, which vindicated her beloved memory. He felt the warm embrace of Nora's mother, no longer ashamed to own her grandchild; and even old John

was made sensible that a secret weight of sorrow was taken from his wife's stern silent heart. Leaning on Leonard's arm, the old man gazed wistfully on Nora's tomb, and muttering, "Egerton! Egerton! 'Leonora, the first wife of the Right Honourable Audley Egerton!' Ha! I voted for him. She married the right colour. Is that the date? Is it so long since she died? Well, well! I miss her sadly. But wife says we shall both now see her soon; and wife once thought we should never see her again,—never; but I always knew better. Thank you, sir. I'm a poor creature, but these tears don't pain me,—quite otherwise. I don't know why, but I'm very happy. Where's my old woman? She does not mind how much I talk about Nora now. Oh, there she is! Thank you, sir, humbly; but I'd rather lean on my old woman,—I'm more used to it; and—wife, when shall we go to Nora?"

Leonard had brought Mrs. Fairfield to see her parents, and Mrs. Avenel welcomed her with unlooked-for kindness. The name inscribed upon Nora's tomb softened the mother's heart to her surviving daughter. As poor John had said, "She could *now* talk about Nora;" and in that talk, she and the child she had so long neglected discovered how much they had in common. So when, shortly after his marriage with Helen, Leonard went abroad, Jane Fairfield remained with the old couple. After their death, which was within a day of each other, she refused, perhaps from pride, to take up her residence with Leonard; but she settled near the home which he subsequently found in England. Leonard remained abroad for some years. A quiet observer of the various manners and intellectual development of living races, a rapt and musing student of the monuments that revive the dead, his experience of mankind grew large in silence, and his perceptions of the Sublime and Beautiful brightened into tranquil art under their native skies.

On his return to England he purchased a small house amidst the most beautiful scenes of Devonshire, and there patiently commenced a work in which he designed to bequeath to his country his noblest thoughts in their fairest forms. Some

men best develop their ideas by constant exercise; their thoughts spring from their brain ready-armed, and seek, like the fabled goddess, to take constant part in the wars of men. And such are, perhaps, on the whole, the most vigorous and lofty writers; but Leonard did not belong to this class. Sweetness and serenity were the main characteristics of his genius; and these were deepened by his profound sense of his domestic happiness. To wander alone with Helen by the banks of the murmurous river; to gaze with her on the deep still sea; to feel that his thoughts, even when most silent, were comprehended by the intuition of love, and reflected on that translucent sympathy so yearned for and so rarely found by poets,—these were the Sabbaths of his soul, necessary to fit him for its labours: for the Writer has this advantage over other men, that his repose is not indolence. His duties, rightly fulfilled, are discharged to earth and men in other capacities than those of action. If he is not seen among those who act, he is all the while maturing some noiseless influence, which will guide or illumine, civilize or elevate, the restless men whose noblest actions are but the obedient agencies of the thoughts of writers. Call not, then, the Poet whom we place amidst the Varieties of Life, the sybarite of literary ease, if, returning on Summer eves, Helen's light footstep by his musing side, he greets his sequestered home, with its trellised flowers smiling out from amidst the lonely cliffs in which it is embedded; while lovers still, though wedded long, they turn to each other, with such deep joy in their speaking eyes, grateful that the world, with its various distractions and noisy conflicts, lies so far from their actual existence,—only united to them by the happy link that the writer weaves invisibly with the hearts that he moves and the souls that he inspires. No! Character and circumstance alike unfitted Leonard for the strife of the thronged literary democracy; they led towards the development of the gentler and purer portions of his nature,—to the gradual suppression of the more combative and turbulent. The influence of the happy light under which his genius so silently and calmly grew, was seen in the exquisite harmony of its colours, rather

than the gorgeous diversities of their glow. His contemplation, intent upon objects of peaceful beauty, and undisturbed by rude anxieties and vehement passions, suggested only kindred reproductions to the creative faculty by which it was vivified; so that the whole man was not only a poet, but, as it were, a poem, — a living idyl, calling into pastoral music every reed that sighed and trembled along the stream of life. And Helen was so suited to a nature of this kind, she so guarded the ideal existence in which it breathes! All the little cares and troubles of the common practical life she appropriated so quietly to herself, — the stronger of the two, as should be a poet's wife, in the necessary household virtues of prudence and forethought. Thus if the man's genius made the home a temple, the woman's wisdom gave to the temple the security of the fortress. They have only one child, — a girl; they call her Nora. She has the father's soul-lit eyes, and the mother's warm human smile. She assists Helen in the morning's noiseless domestic duties; she sits in the evening at Leonard's feet, while he reads or writes. In each light grief of childhood she steals to the mother's knee; but in each young impulse of delight, or each brighter flash of progressive reason, she springs to the father's breast. Sweet Helen, thou hast taught her this, taking to thyself the shadows even of thine infant's life, and leaving to thy partner's eyes only its rosy light!

But not here shall this picture of Helen close. Even the Ideal can only complete its purpose by connection with the Real; even in solitude the writer must depend upon mankind.

Leonard at last has completed the work, which has been the joy and the labour of so many years, — the work which he regards as the flower of all his spiritual being, and to which he has committed all the hopes that unite the creature of to-day with the generations of the future. The work has gone through the press, each line lingered over with the elaborate patience of the artist, loath to part with the thought he has sculptured into form, while an improving touch can be imparted by the chisel. He has accepted an invitation from

Norreys. In the restless excitement (strange to him since his first happy maiden effort) he has gone to London. Unrecognized in the huge metropolis, he has watched to see if the world acknowledge the new tie he has woven between its busy life and his secluded toil. And the work came out in an unpropitious hour; other things were occupying the public; the world was not at leisure to heed him, and the book did not penetrate into the great circle of readers. But a savage critic has seized on it, and mangled, distorted, deformed it, confounding together defect and beauty in one mocking ridicule; and the beauties have not yet found an exponent, nor the defects a defender; and the publisher shakes his head, points to groaning shelves, and delicately hints that the work which was to be the epitome of the sacred life within life does not hit the taste of the day. Leonard thinks over the years that his still labour has cost him, and knows that he has exhausted the richest mines of his intellect, and that long years will elapse before he can recruit that capital of ideas which is necessary to sink new shafts and bring to light fresh ore; and the deep despondency of intellect, frustrated in its highest aims, has seized him, and all he has before done is involved in failure by the defeat of the crowning effort. Failure, and irrecoverable, seems his whole ambition as writer; his whole existence in the fair Ideal seems to have been a profitless dream, and the face of the Ideal itself is obscured. And even Norreys frankly, though kindly, intimates that the life of a metropolis is essential to the healthful intuition of a writer in the intellectual wants of his age, since every great writer supplies a want in his own generation, for some feeling to be announced, some truth to be revealed. And as this maxim is generally sound, as most great writers have lived in cities, Leonard dares not dwell on the exception; it is only success that justifies the attempt to be an exception to the common rule; and with the blunt manhood of his nature, which is not a poet's, Norreys sums up with, "What then? One experiment has failed; fit your life to your genius, and try again." Try again! Easy counsel enough to the man of ready resource and quick combative

mind; but to Leonard, how hard and how harsh! "Fit his life to his genius!" — renounce contemplation and Nature for the jostle of Oxford Street! Would that life not scare away the genius forever? Perplexed and despondent, though still struggling for fortitude, he returns to his home; and there at his hearth awaits the Soother, and there is the voice that repeats the passages most beloved, and prophesies so confidently of future fame; and gradually all around smiles from the smile of Helen. And the profound conviction that Heaven places human happiness beyond the reach of the world's contempt or praise, circulates through his system and restores its serene calm. And he feels that the duty of the intellect is to accomplish and perfect itself,—to harmonize its sounds into music that may be heard in heaven, though it wake not an echo on the earth. If this be done, as with some men, best amidst the din and the discord, be it so; if, as with him, best in silence, be it so too. And the next day he reclines with Helen by the seashore, gazing calmly as before on the measureless sunlit ocean; and Helen, looking into his face, sees that it is sunlit as the deep. His hand steals within her own, in the gratitude that endears beyond the power of passion, and he murmurs gently, "Blessed be the woman who consoles."

The work found its way at length into fame, and the fame sent its voices loud to the poet's home. But the applause of the world had not a sound so sweet to his ear, as, when, in doubt, humiliation, and sadness, the lips of his Helen had whispered "Hope! and believe!"

Side by side with this picture of Woman the Consoler, let me place the companion sketch. Harley L'Estrange, shortly after his marriage with Violante, had been induced, whether at his bride's persuasions, or to dissipate the shadow with which Egerton's death still clouded his wedded felicity, to accept a temporary mission, half military, half civil, to one of our colonies. On this mission he had evinced so much ability and achieved so signal a success, that on his return to England he was raised to the peerage, while his father yet lived to rejoice that the son who would succeed to his honours

had achieved the nobler dignity of honours not inherited, but won. High expectations were formed of Harley's parliamentary success; but he saw that such success, to be durable, must found itself on the knowledge of wearisome details, and the study of that practical business which jarred on his tastes, though it suited his talents. Harley had been indolent for so many years,—and there is so much to make indolence captivating to a man whose rank is secured, who has nothing to ask from fortune, and who finds at his home no cares from which he seeks a distraction; so he laughed at ambition in the whim of his delightful humours, and the expectations formed from his diplomatic triumph died away. But then came one of those political crises, in which men ordinarily indifferent to politics rouse themselves to the recollection that the experiment of legislation is not made upon dead matter, but on the living form of a noble country; and in both Houses of Parliament the strength of party is put forth.

It is a lovely day in spring, and Harley is seated by the window of his old room at Knightsbridge,—now glancing to the lively green of the budding trees; now idling with Nero, who, though in canine old age, enjoys the sun like his master; now repeating to himself, as he turns over the leaves of his favourite Horace, some of those lines that make the shortness of life the excuse for seizing its pleasures and eluding its fatigues, which formed the staple morality of the polished epicurean; and Violante (into what glorious beauty her maiden bloom has matured!) comes softly into the room, seats herself on a low stool beside him, leaning her face on her hands, and looking up at him through her dark, clear, spiritual eyes; and as she continues to speak, gradually a change comes over Harley's aspect, gradually the brow grows thoughtful, and the lips lose their playful smile. There is no hateful assumption of the would-be "superior woman," no formal remonstrance, no lecture, no homily which grates upon masculine pride; but the high theme and the eloquent words elevate unconsciously of themselves, and the Horace is laid aside,—a Parliamentary Blue Book has been, by some marvel or other, conjured there in its stead; and Violante now

moves away as softly as she entered. Harley's hand detains her.

"Not so. Share the task, or I quit it. Here is an extract I condemn you to copy. Do you think I would go through this labour if you were not to halve the success? — halve the labour as well!"

And Violante, overjoyed, kisses away the implied rebuke, and sits down to work, so demure and so proud, by his side. I do not know if Harley made much way in the Blue Book that morning; but a little time after he spoke in the Lords, and surpassed all that the most sanguine had hoped from his talents. The sweetness of fame and the consciousness of utility once fully tasted, Harley's consummation of his proper destinies was secure. A year later, and his voice was one of the influences of England. His boyish love of glory revived, — no longer vague and dreamy, but ennobled into patriotism, and strengthened into purpose. One night, after a signal triumph, he returned home, with his father, who had witnessed it, and Violante — who all lovely, all brilliant, though she was, never went forth in her lord's absence, to lower among fops and flatterers the dignity of the name she so aspired to raise — sprang to meet him. Harley's eldest son — a boy yet in the nursery — had been kept up later than usual; perhaps Violante had anticipated her husband's triumph, and wished the son to share it. The old earl beckoned the child to him, and laying his hand on the infant's curly locks, said with unusual seriousness, —

"My boy, you may see troubled times in England before these hairs are as gray as mine; and your stake in England's honour and peace will be great. Heed this hint from an old man who had no talents to make a noise in the world, but who yet has been of some use in his generation. Neither sounding titles, nor wide lands, nor fine abilities, will give you real joy, unless you hold yourself responsible for all to your God and to your country; and when you are tempted to believe that the gifts you may inherit from both entail no duties, or that duties are at war with true pleasure, remember how I placed you in your father's arms, and said,

‘Let him be as proud of you some day as I at this hour am of him.’”

The boy clung to his father’s breast, and said manfully, “I will try!” Harley bent his fair smooth brow over the young earnest face, and said softly, “Your mother speaks in you!”

Then the old countess, who had remained silent and listening on her elbow-chair, rose and kissed the earl’s hand reverently. Perhaps in that kiss there was the repentant consciousness how far the active goodness she had often secretly undervalued had exceeded, in its fruits, her own cold unproductive powers of will and mind. Then passing on to Harley, her brow grew elate, and the pride returned to her eye.

“At last,” she said, laying on his shoulder that light firm hand, from which he no longer shrunk,—“at last, O my noble son, you have fulfilled all the promise of your youth!”

“If so,” answered Harley, “it is because I have found what I then sought in vain.” He drew his arm around Violante, and added, with half tender, half solemn smile, “Blessed is the woman who exalts!”

So, symbolled forth in these twin and fair flowers which Eve saved for Earth out of Paradise, each with the virtue to heal or to strengthen, stored under the leaves that give sweets to the air; here, soothing the heart when the world brings the trouble; here, recruiting the soul which our sloth or our senses enervate, leave we Woman, at least in the place Heaven assigns to her amidst the multiform “Varieties of Life.”

Farewell to thee, gentle Reader; and go forth to the world,
O MY NOVEL!

THE END.

PAUL CLIFFORD

PAUL CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I.

SAY, ye oppressed by some fantastic woes,
Some jarring nerve that baffles your repose,
Who press the downy couch while slaves advance
With timid eye to read the distant glance,
Who with sad prayers the weary doctor tease
To name the nameless, ever-new disease,
Who with mock patience dire complaints endure,
Which real pain and that alone can cure, —
How would you bear in real pain to lie
Despised, neglected, left alone to die?
How would you bear to draw your latest breath
Where all that's wretched paves the way to death? — CRABBE.

It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents, except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the house-tops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness. Through one of the obscurest quarters of London, and among haunts little loved by the gentlemen of the police, a man, evidently of the lowest orders, was wending his solitary way. He stopped twice or thrice at different shops and houses of a description correspondent with the appearance of the *quartier* in which they were situated, and tended inquiry for some article or another which did not seem easily to be met with. All the answers he received were couched in the negative; and as he turned from each door he muttered to himself, in no very elegant phraseology, his disappointment and discontent. At length, at one

house, the landlord, a sturdy butcher, after rendering the same reply the inquirer had hitherto received, added, "But if *this* vill do as vell, Dummie, it is quite at your sarvice!" Pausing reflectively for a moment, Dummie responded that he thought the thing proffered *might* do as well; and thrusting it into his ample pocket, he strode away with as rapid a motion as the wind and the rain would allow. He soon came to a nest of low and dingy buildings, at the entrance to which, in half-effaced characters, was written "Thames Court." Halting at the most conspicuous of these buildings, an inn or alehouse, through the half-closed windows of which blazed out in ruddy comfort the beams of the hospitable hearth, he knocked hastily at the door. He was admitted by a lady of a certain age, and endowed with a comely rotundity of face and person.

"Hast got it, Dummie?" said she, quickly, as she closed the door on the guest.

"Noa, noa! not exactly; but I thinks as 'ow —"

"Pish, you fool!" cried the woman, interrupting him peevishly. "Vy, it is no use desaving me. You knows you has only stepped from my boosing-ken to another, and you has not been arter the book at all. So there's the poor cretur a raving and a dying, and you —"

"Let I speak!" interrupted Dummie in his turn. "I tells you I vent first to Mother Bussblone's, who, I knows, chops the whiners morning and evening to the young ladies, and I axes there for a Bible; and she says, says she, 'I 'as only a "Companion to the Halter," but you 'll get a Bible, I think, at Master Talkins', the cobbler as preaches.' So I goes to Master Talkins, and he says, says he, 'I 'as no call for the Bible, — 'cause vy? I 'as a call vithout; but mayhap you 'll be a getting it at the butcher's hover the vay, — 'cause vy? The butcher 'll be damned!' So I goes hover the vay, and the butcher says, says he, 'I 'as not a Bible, but I 'as a book of plays bound for all the world just like 'un, and mayhap the poor cretur may n't see the difference.' So I takes the plays, Mrs. Margery, and here they be surely! And how's poor Judy?"

“Fearsome! she ’ll not be over the night, I ’m a thinking.”

“Vell, I ’ll track up the dancers!”

So saying, Dummie ascended a doorless staircase, across the entrance of which a blanket, stretched angularly from the wall to the chimney, afforded a kind of screen; and presently he stood within a chamber which the dark and painful genius of Crabbe might have delighted to portray. The walls were whitewashed, and at sundry places strange figures and grotesque characters had been traced by some mirthful inmate, in such sable outline as the end of a smoked stick or the edge of a piece of charcoal is wont to produce. The wan and flickering light afforded by a farthing candle gave a sort of grimness and menace to these achievements of pictorial art, especially as they more than once received embellishments from portraits of Satan such as he is accustomed to be drawn. A low fire burned gloomily in the sooty grate, and on the hob hissed “the still small voice” of an iron kettle. On a round deal table were two vials, a cracked cup, a broken spoon of some dull metal, and upon two or three mutilated chairs were scattered various articles of female attire. On another table, placed below a high, narrow, shutterless casement (athwart which, instead of a curtain, a checked apron had been loosely hung, and now waved fitfully to and fro in the gusts of wind that made easy ingress through many a chink and cranny), were a looking-glass, sundry appliances of the toilet, a box of coarse rouge, a few ornaments of more show than value, and a watch, the regular and calm click of which produced that indescribably painful feeling which, we fear, many of our readers who have heard the sound in a sick-chamber can easily recall. A large tester-bed stood opposite to this table, and the looking-glass partially reflected curtains of a faded stripe, and ever and anon (as the position of the sufferer followed the restless emotion of a disordered mind) glimpses of the face of one on whom Death was rapidly hastening. Beside this bed now stood Dummie, a small, thin man dressed in a tattered plush jerkin, from which the rain-drops slowly dripped, and with a thin, yellow, cunning physiognomy grotesquely hideous in feature, but not positively villanous in

expression. On the other side of the bed stood a little boy of about three years old, dressed as if belonging to the better classes, although the garb was somewhat tattered and discoloured. The poor child trembled violently, and evidently looked with a feeling of relief on the entrance of Dummie. And now there slowly, and with many a phthisical sigh, heaved towards the foot of the bed the heavy frame of the woman who had accosted Dummie below, and had followed him, *haud passibus æquis*, to the room of the sufferer; she stood with a bottle of medicine in her hand, shaking its contents up and down, and with a kindly yet timid compassion spread over a countenance crimsoned with habitual libations. This made the scene, — save that on a chair by the bedside lay a profusion of long, glossy, golden ringlets, which had been cut from the head of the sufferer when the fever had begun to mount upwards, but which, with a jealousy that portrayed the darling littleness of a vain heart, she had seized and insisted on retaining near her; and save that, by the fire, perfectly inattentive to the event about to take place within the chamber, and to which we of the biped race attach so awful an importance, lay a large gray cat, curled in a ball, and dozing with half-shut eyes, and ears that now and then denoted, by a gentle inflection, the jar of a louder or nearer sound than usual upon her lethargic senses. The dying woman did not at first attend to the entrance either of Dummie or the female at the foot of the bed, but she turned herself round towards the child, and grasping his arm fiercely, she drew him towards her, and gazed on his terrified features with a look in which exhaustion and an exceeding wanness of complexion were even horribly contrasted by the glare and energy of delirium.

“If you are like *him*,” she muttered, “I will strangle you, — I will! Ay, tremble, you ought to tremble when your mother touches you, or when *he* is mentioned. You have his eyes, you have! Out with them, out, — the devil sits laughing in them! Oh, you weep, do you, little one? Well, now, be still, my love; be hushed! I would not harm thee! Harm — O God, he *is* my child after all!” And at these words she

clasped the boy passionately to her breast, and burst into tears.

"Coom, now, coom," said Dummie, soothingly; "take the stuff, Judith, and then ve'll talk over the hurchin!"

The mother relaxed her grasp of the boy, and turning towards the speaker, gazed at him for some moments with a bewildered stare; at length she appeared slowly to remember him, and said, as she raised herself on one hand, and pointed the other towards him with an inquiring gesture, —

"Thou hast brought the book?"

Dummie answered by lifting up the book he had brought from the honest butcher's.

"Clear the room, then," said the sufferer, with that air of mock command so common to the insane. "We would be alone!"

Dummie winked at the good woman at the foot of the bed; and she (though generally no easy person to order or to persuade) left, without reluctance, the sick chamber.

"If she be a going to pray," murmured our landlady (for that office did the good matron hold), "I may indeed as well take myself off, for it's not werry comfortable like to those who be old to hear all that 'ere!"

With this pious reflection, the hostess of the Mug, — so was the hostelry called, — heavily descended the creaking stairs.

"Now, man," said the sufferer, sternly, "swear that you will never reveal, — swear, I say! And by the great God whose angels are about this night, if ever you break the oath, I will come back and haunt you to your dying day!"

Dummie's face grew pale, for he was superstitiously affected by the vehemence and the language of the dying woman, and he answered, as he kissed the pretended Bible, that he swore to keep the secret, as much as he knew of it, which, she must be sensible, he said, was very little. As he spoke, the wind swept with a loud and sudden gust down the chimney, and shook the roof above them so violently as to loosen many of the crumbling tiles, which fell one after the other, with a crashing noise, on the pavement below. Dummie started in affright; and perhaps his conscience smote him for the trick

he had played with regard to the false Bible. But the woman, whose excited and unstrung nerves led her astray from one subject to another with preternatural celerity, said, with an hysterical laugh, "See, Dummie, they come in' state for me; give me the cap — yonder — and bring the looking-glass!"

Dummie obeyed; and the woman, as she in a low tone uttered something about the unbecoming colour of the ribbons, adjusted the cap on her head, and then, saying in a regretful and petulant voice, "Why should they have cut off my hair? Such a disfigurement!" bade Dummie desire Mrs. Margery once more to ascend to her.

Left alone with her child, the face of the wretched mother softened as she regarded him, and all the levities and all the vehemences — if we may use the word — which, in the turbulent commotion of her delirium, had been stirred upward to the surface of her mind, gradually now sank as death increased upon her, and a mother's anxiety rose to the natural level from which it had been disturbed and abased. She took the child to her bosom, and clasping him in her arms, which grew weaker with every instant, she soothed him with the sort of chant which nurses sing over their untoward infants; but her voice was cracked and hollow, and as she felt it was so, the mother's eyes filled with tears. Mrs. Margery now re-entered; and turning towards the hostess with an impressive calmness of manner which astonished and awed the person she addressed, the dying woman pointed to the child and said, —

"You have been kind to me, very kind, and may God bless you for it! I have found that those whom the world calls the worst are often the most *human*. But I am not going to thank you as I ought to do, but to ask of you a last and exceeding favour. Protect my child till he grows up. You have often said you loved him, — you are childless yourself, — and a morsel of bread and a shelter for the night, which is all I ask of you to give him, will not impoverish more legitimate claimants."

Poor Mrs. Margery, fairly sobbing, vowed she would be a mother to the child, and that she would endeavour to rear

him honestly; though a public-house was not, she confessed, the best place for good examples.

"Take him," cried the mother, hoarsely, as her voice, failing her strength, rattled indistinctly, and almost died within her. "Take him, rear him as you will, as you can; any example, any roof, better than—" Here the words were inaudible. "And oh, may it be a curse and a— Give me the medicine; I am dying."

The hostess, alarmed, hastened to comply; but before she returned to the bedside, the sufferer was insensible, — nor did she again recover speech or motion. A low and rare moan only testified continued life, and within two hours that ceased, and the spirit was gone. At that time our good hostess was herself beyond the things of this outer world, having supported her spirits during the vigils of the night with so many little liquid stimulants that they finally sank into that torpor which generally succeeds excitement. Taking, perhaps, advantage of the opportunity which the insensibility of the hostess afforded him, Dummie, by the expiring ray of the candle that burned in the death-chamber, hastily opened a huge box (which was generally concealed under the bed, and contained the wardrobe of the deceased), and turned with irreverent hand over the linens and the silks, until quite at the bottom of the trunk he discovered some packets of letters; these he seized, and buried in the conveniences of his dress. He then, rising and replacing the box, cast a longing eye towards the watch on the toilet-table, which was of gold; but he withdrew his gaze, and with a querulous sigh observed to himself: "The old blowen kens of that, 'od rat her! but, howsomever, I'll take this: who knows but it may be of sarvice. Tannies to-day may be smash to-morrow!"¹ and he laid his coarse hand on the golden and silky tresses we have described. "'T is a rum business, and puzzles I; but mum 's the word for my own little colquarren."²

With this brief soliloquy Dummie descended the stairs and let himself out of the house.

¹ Meaning, what is of no value now may be precious hereafter.

² Colquarren, neck.

CHAPTER II.

IMAGINATION fondly stoops to trace
The parlor splendours of that festive place.

Deserted Village.

THERE is little to interest in a narrative of early childhood, unless, indeed, one were writing on education. We shall not, therefore, linger over the infancy of the motherless boy left to the protection of Mrs. Margery Lobkins, or, as she was sometimes familiarly called, Peggy, or Piggy, Lob. The good dame, drawing a more than sufficient income from the profits of a house which, if situated in an obscure locality, enjoyed very general and lucrative repute, and being a lone widow without kith or kin, had no temptation to break her word to the deceased, and she suffered the orphan to wax in strength and understanding until the age of twelve, — a period at which we are now about to reintroduce him to our readers.

The boy evinced great hardihood of temper, and no inconsiderable quickness of intellect. In whatever he attempted, his success was rapid, and a remarkable strength of limb and muscle seconded well the dictates of an ambition turned, it must be confessed, rather to physical than mental exertion. It is not to be supposed, however, that his boyish life passed in unbroken tranquillity. Although Mrs. Lobkins was a good woman on the whole, and greatly attached to her *protégé*, she was violent and rude in temper, or, as she herself more flatteringly expressed it, “her feelings were unkimmonly strong;” and alternate quarrel and reconciliation constituted the chief occupations of the *protégé’s* domestic life. As, previous to his becoming the ward of Mrs. Lobkins, he had never received any other appellation than “the child,” so the duty of christening him devolved upon our hostess of the Mug; and after some deliberation, she blessed him with the name of Paul. It was a name of happy omen, for it had belonged to Mrs.

Lobkins's grandfather, who had been three times transported and twice hanged (at the first occurrence of the latter description, he had been restored by the surgeons, much to the chagrin of a young anatomist who was to have had the honour of cutting him up). The boy did not seem likely to merit the distinguished appellation he bore, for he testified no remarkable predisposition to the property of other people. Nay, although he sometimes emptied the pockets of any stray visitor to the coffee-room of Mrs. Lobkins, it appeared an act originating rather in a love of the frolic than a desire of the profit; for after the plundered person had been sufficiently tormented by the loss, haply, of such utilities as a tobacco-box or a handkerchief; after he had, to the secret delight of Paul, searched every corner of the apartment, stamped, and fretted, and exposed himself by his petulance to the bitter objurgation of Mrs. Lobkins, our young friend would quietly and suddenly contrive that the article missed should return of its own accord to the pocket from which it had disappeared. And thus, as our readers have doubtless experienced when they have disturbed the peace of a whole household for the loss of some portable treasure which they themselves are afterwards discovered to have mislaid, the unfortunate victim of Paul's honest ingenuity, exposed to the collected indignation of the spectators, and sinking from the accuser into the convicted, secretly cursed the unhappy lot which not only vexed him with the loss of his property, but made it still more annoying to recover it.

Whether it was that, on discovering these pranks, Mrs. Lobkins trembled for the future bias of the address they displayed, or whether she thought that the folly of thieving without gain required speedy and permanent correction, we cannot decide; but the good lady became at last extremely anxious to secure for Paul the blessings of a liberal education. The key of knowledge (the art of reading) she had, indeed, two years prior to the present date, obtained for him; but this far from satisfied her conscience, — nay, she felt that if she could not also obtain for him the discretion to use it, it would have been wise even to have withheld a key which the

boy seemed perversely to apply to all locks but the right one. In a word, she was desirous that he should receive an education far superior to those whom he saw around him; and attributing, like most ignorant persons, too great advantages to learning, she conceived that in order to live as decorously as the parson of the parish, it was only necessary to know as much Latin.

One evening in particular, as the dame sat by her cheerful fire, this source of anxiety was unusually active in her mind, and ever and anon she directed unquiet and restless glances towards Paul, who sat on a form at the opposite corner of the hearth, diligently employed in reading the life and adventures of the celebrated Richard Turpin. The form on which the boy sat was worn to a glassy smoothness, save only in certain places, where some ingenious idler or another had amused himself by carving sundry names, epithets, and epigrammatic niceties of language. It is said that the organ of carving upon wood is prominently developed on all English skulls; and the sagacious Mr. Combe has placed this organ at the back of the head, in juxtaposition to that of destructiveness, which is equally large among our countrymen, as is notably evinced upon all railings, seats, temples, and other things — belonging to other-people.

Opposite to the fireplace was a large deal table, at which Dummie, surnamed Dunnaker, seated near the dame, was quietly ruminating over a glass of hollands and water. Farther on, at another table in the corner of the room, a gentleman with a red wig, very rusty garments, and linen which seemed as if it had been boiled in saffron, smoked his pipe, apart, silent, and apparently plunged in meditation. This gentleman was no other than Mr. Peter MacGrawler, the editor of a magnificent periodical entitled "The Asinæum," which was written to prove that whatever is popular is necessarily bad, — a valuable and recondite truth, which "The Asinæum" had satisfactorily demonstrated by ruining three printers and demolishing a publisher. We need not add that Mr. MacGrawler was Scotch by birth, since we believe it is pretty well known that *ali* periodicals of this country have,

from time immemorial, been monopolized by the gentlemen of the Land of Cakes. We know not how it may be the fashion to eat the said cakes in Scotland, but *here* the good emigrators seem to like them carefully buttered on both sides. By the side of the editor stood a large pewter tankard; above him hung an engraving of the "wonderfully fat boar formerly in the possession of Mr. Fattem, grazier." To his left rose the dingy form of a thin, upright clock in an oaken case; beyond the clock, a spit and a musket were fastened in parallels to the wall. Below those twin emblems of war and cookery were four shelves, containing plates of pewter and delf, and terminating, centaur-like, in a sort of dresser. At the other side of these domestic conveniences was a picture of Mrs. Lobkins, in a scarlet body and a hat and plume. At the back of the fair hostess stretched the blanket we have before mentioned. As a relief to the monotonous surface of this simple screen, various ballads and learned legends were pinned to the blanket. There might you read in verses, pathetic and unadorned, how —

"Sally loved a sailor lad
As fought with famous Shovel!"

There might you learn, if of two facts so instructive you were before unconscious, that —

"Ben the toper loved his bottle, —
Charley only loved the lasses!"

When of these and various other poetical effusions you were somewhat wearied, the literary fragments in humbler prose afforded you equal edification and delight. There might you fully enlighten yourself as to the "Strange and Wonderful News from Kensington, being a most full and true Relation how a Maid there is supposed to have been carried away by an Evil Spirit on Wednesday, 15th of April last, about Midnight." There, too, no less interesting and no less veracious, was that uncommon anecdote touching the chief of many-throned powers entitled "The Divell of Mascon; or, the true Relation of the Chief Things which an Unclean Spirit did and

said at Mascon, in Burgundy, in the house of one Mr. Francis Pereaud: now made English by one that hath a Particular Knowledge of the Truth of the Story."

Nor were these materials for Satanic history the only prosaic and faithful chronicles which the bibliothecal blanket afforded. Equally wonderful, and equally indisputable, was the account of "a young lady, the daughter of a duke, with three legs and the face of a porcupine." Nor less so "The Awful Judgment of God upon Swearers, as exemplified in the case of John Stiles, who Dropped down dead after swearing a Great Oath; and on stripping the unhappy man they found 'Swear not at all' written on the tail of his shirt!"

Twice had Mrs. Lobkins heaved a long sigh, as her eyes turned from Paul to the tranquil countenance of Dummie Dunnaker, and now, re-settling herself in her chair, as a motherly anxiety gathered over her visage, —

"Paul, my ben cull," said she, "what gibberish hast got there?"

"Turpin, *the great* highwayman!" answered the young student, without lifting his eyes from the page, through which he was spelling his instructive way.

"Oh! he be's a chip of the right block, dame!" said Mr. Dunnaker, as he applied his pipe to an illumined piece of paper. "He'll ride a 'oss foaled by a hacorn yet, I varrants!"

To this prophecy the dame replied only with a look of indignation; and rocking herself to and fro in her huge chair, she remained for some moments in silent thought. At last she again wistfully eyed the hopeful boy, and calling him to her side, communicated some order, in a dejected whisper. Paul, on receiving it, disappeared behind the blanket, and presently returned with a bottle and a wineglass. With an abstracted gesture, and an air that betokened continued meditation, the good dame took the inspiring cordial from the hand of her youthful cupbearer, —

"And ere a man had power to say 'Behold!'

The jaws of Lobkins had devoured it up:

So quick bright things come to confusion!"



DUMMIE DUNNAKER, MRS. LOBKINS, AND LITTLE PAUL AT "THE MUG."

The nectarean beverage seemed to operate cheerily on the matron's system; and placing her hand on the boy's curly head, she said (like Andromache, *dakruon gelasasa*, or, as Scott hath it, "With a smile on her cheek, but a tear in her eye"), —

"Paul, thy heart be good, thy heart be good; thou didst not spill a drop of the tape! Tell me, my honey, why didst thou lick Tom Tobyson?"

"Because," answered Paul, "he said as how you ought to have been hanged long ago."

"Tom Tobyson is a good-for-nought," returned the dame, "and deserves to shove the tumbler;¹ but oh, my child, be not too venturesome in taking up the sticks for a blowen, — it has been the ruin of many a man afore you; and when two men goes to quarrel for a 'oman, they does n't know the natur' of the thing they quarrels about. Mind thy latter end, Paul, and reverence the old, without axing what they has been before they passed into the wale of years. Thou mayst get me my pipe, Paul, — it is upstairs, under the pillow."

While Paul was accomplishing this errand, the lady of the Mug, fixing her eyes upon Mr. Dunnaker, said, "Dummie, Dummie, if little Paul should come to be scragged!"

"Whish!" muttered Dummie, glancing over his shoulder at MacGrawler; "mayhap that gemman —" Here his voice became scarcely audible even to Mrs. Lobkins; but his whisper seemed to imply an insinuation that the illustrious editor of "The Asinæum" might be either an informer, or one of those heroes on whom an informer subsists.

Mrs. Lobkins's answer, couched in the same key, appeared to satisfy Dunnaker, for with a look of great contempt he chucked up his head and said, "Oho! that be all, be it!"

Paul here reappeared with the pipe; and the dame, having filled the tube, leaned forward, and lighted the Virginian weed from the *blower* of Mr. Dunnaker. As in this interesting occupation the heads of the hostess and the guest approached each other, the glowing light playing cheerily on the counte-

¹ Be whipped at the cart's tail.

nance of each, there was an honest simplicity in the picture that would have merited the racy and vigorous genius of a Cruikshank. As soon as the Promethean spark had been fully communicated to the lady's tube, Mrs. Lobkins, still possessed by the gloomy idea she had conjured up, repeated, —

“Ah, Dummie, if little Paul should be scragged!”

Dummie, withdrawing the pipe from his mouth, heaved a sympathizing puff, but remained silent; and Mrs. Lobkins, turning to Paul, who stood with mouth open and ears erect at this boding ejaculation, said, —

“Dost think, Paul, they 'd have the heart to hang thee?”

“I think they 'd have the rope, dame!” returned the youth.

“But you need not go for to run your neck into the noose!” said the matron; and then, inspired by the spirit of moralizing, she turned round to the youth, and gazing upon his attentive countenance, accosted him with the following admonitions: —

“Mind thy kittychism, child, and reverence old age. Never steal, 'specially when any one be in the way. Never go snacks with them as be older than you, — 'cause why? The older a cove be, the more he cares for hisself, and the less for his partner. At twenty, we diddles the public; at forty, we diddles our cronies! Be modest, Paul, and stick to your sitivation in life. Go not with fine tobymen, who burn out like a candle wot has a thief in it, — all flare, and gone in a whiffy! Leave liquor to the aged, who can't do without it. Tape often proves a halter, and there be's no ruin like blue ruin! Read your Bible, and talk like a pious 'un. People goes more by your words than your actions. If you wants what is not your own, try and do without it; and if you cannot do without it, take it away by insinivation, not bluster. They as swindles does more and risks less than they as robs; and if you cheats toppingly, you may laugh at the topping cheat.¹ And now go play.”

Paul seized his hat, but lingered; and the dame, guessing at the signification of the pause, drew forth and placed in the boy's hand the sum of five halfpence and one farthing.

¹ Gallows.

"There, boy," quoth she, and she stroked his head fondly when she spoke, "you does right not to play for nothing, — it's loss of time; but play with those as be less than yoursel', and then you can go for to beat 'em if they says you go for to cheat!"

Paul vanished; and the dame, laying her hand on Dummie's shoulder, said, —

"There be nothing like a friend in need, Dummie; and somehow or other, I thinks as how you knows more of the horigin of that 'ere lad than any of us!"

"Me, dame!" exclaimed Dummie, with a broad gaze of astonishment.

"Ah, you! you knows as how the mother saw more of you just afore she died than she did of 'ere one of us. Noar, now, noar, now! Tell us all about 'un. Did she steal 'un, think ye?"

"Lauk, Mother Margery, dost think I knows? Vot put such a crotchet in your 'ead?"

"Well!" said the dame, with a disappointed sigh, "I always thought as how you were more knowing about it than you owns. Dear, dear, I shall never forgit the night when Judith brought the poor cretur here, — you knows she had been some months in my house afore ever I see'd the urchin; and when she brought it, she looked so pale and ghostly that I had not the heart to say a word, so I stared at the brat, and it stretched out its wee little hands to me. And the mother frowned at it, and throwed it into my lap."

"Ah! she was a hawful voman, that 'ere!" said Dummie, shaking his head. "But howsomever, the hurchin fell into good 'ands; for I be 's sure you 'as been a better mother to 'un than the raal 'un!"

"I was always a fool about childer," rejoined Mrs. Lobkins; "and I thinks as how little Paul was sent to be a comfort to my latter end! Fill the glass, Dummie."

"I 'as heard as 'ow Judith was once blowen to a great lord!" said Dummie.

"Like enough!" returned Mrs. Lobkins, — "like enough! She was always a favourite of mine, for she had a spuret

[spirit] as big as my own; and she paid her rint like a decent body, for all she was out of her sinses, or 'nation like it."

"Ay, I *knows* as how you liked her, — 'cause vy? 'T is not your vay to let a room to a voman! You says as how 't is not respectable, and you only likes *men* to wisit the Mug!"

"And I does n't like all of them as comes here!" answered the dame, — "'specially for Paul's sake; but what can a lone 'oman do? Many's the gentleman highwayman wot comes here, whose money is as good as the clerk's of the parish. And when a bob¹ is in my hand, what does it sinnify whose hand it was in afore?"

"That's what I call being sinsible and *practical*," said Dummie, approvingly. "And arter all, though you 'as a mixture like, I does not know a halehouse where a cove is better entertained, nor meets of a Sunday more illegant company, than the Mug!"

Here the conversation, which the reader must know had been sustained in a key inaudible to a third person, received a check from Mr. Peter MacGrawler, who, having finished his revery and his tankard, now rose to depart. First, however, approaching Mrs. Lobkins, he observed that he had gone on credit for some days, and demanded the amount of his bill. Glancing towards certain chalk hieroglyphics inscribed on the wall at the other side of the fireplace, the dame answered that Mr. MacGrawler was indebted to her for the sum of one shilling and ninepence three farthings.

After a short preparatory search in his waistcoat pockets, the critic hunted into one corner a solitary half-crown, and having caught it between his finger and thumb, he gave it to Mrs. Lobkins and requested change.

As soon as the matron felt her hand anointed with what has been called by some ingenious Johnson of St. Giles's "the oil of palms," her countenance softened into a complacent smile; and when she gave the required change to Mr. MacGrawler, she graciously hoped as how he would recommend the Mug to the public.

"That you may be sure of," said the editor of "The

¹ Shilling.

Asinæum." "There is not a place where I am so much at home."

With that the learned Scotsman buttoned his coat and went his way.

"How spiteful the world be!" said Mrs. Lobkins, after a pause, "'specially if a 'oman keeps a fashionable sort of a public! When Judith died, Joe, the dog's-meat man, said I war all the better for it, and that she left I a treasure to bring up the urchin. One would think a thumper makes a man richer, — 'cause why? Every man *thumps*! I got nothing more than a watch and ten guineas when Judy died, and sure that scarce paid for the burrel [burial]."

"You forgits the two quids¹ I giv' you for the hold box of rags, — much of a treasure I found there!" said Dummie, with sycophantic archness.

"Ay," cried the dame, laughing, "I fancies you war not pleased with the bargain. I thought you war too old a rag-merchant to be so free with the blunt; howsomever, I supposes it war the tinsel petticoat as took you-in!"

"As it has mony a viser man than the like of I," rejoined Dummie, who to his various secret professions added the ostensible one of a rag-merchant and dealer in broken glass.

The recollection of her good bargain in the box of rags opened our landlady's heart.

"Drink, Dummie," said she, good-humouredly, — "drink; I scorns to score lush to a friend."

Dummie expressed his gratitude, refilled his glass, and the hospitable matron, knocking out from her pipe the dying ashes, thus proceeded: —

"You sees, Dummie, though I often beats the boy, I loves him as much as if I war his raal mother, — I wants to make him an honour to his country, and an ixception to my family!"

"Who all flashed their ivories at Surgeons' Hall!" added the metaphorical Dummie.

"True!" said the lady; "they died game, and I ben't ashamed of 'em. But I owes a duty to Paul's mother, and I wants Paul to have a long life. I would send him to school,

¹ Guineas.

but you knows as how the boys only corrupt one another. And so, I should like to meet with some decent man, as a tutor, to teach the lad Latin and vartue!"

"My eyes!" cried Dummie, aghast at the grandeur of this desire.

"The boy is 'cute enough, and he loves reading," continued the dame; but I does not think the books he gets hold of will teach him the way to grow old."

"And 'ow came he to read, anyhow?"

"Ranting Rob, the strolling player, taught him his letters, and said he 'd a deal of janius."

"And why should not Ranting Rob tache the boy Latin and vartue?"

"'Cause Ranting Rob, poor fellow, was lagged for doing a panny!"¹ answered the dame, despondently.

There was a long silence; it was broken by Mr. Dummie. Slapping his thigh with the gesticulatory vehemence of a Ugo Foscolo, that gentleman exclaimed, —

"I 'as it, — I 'as thought of a tutor for leetle Paul!"

"Who's that? You quite frightens me; you 'as no marcy on my narves," said the dame, fretfully.

"Vy, it be the gemman vot writes," said Dummie, putting his finger to his nose, — "the gemman vot paid you so flashly!"

"What! the Scotch gemman?"

"The werry same!" returned Dummie.

The dame turned in her chair and refilled her pipe. It was evident from her manner that Mr. Dunnaker's suggestion had made an impression on her. But she recognized two doubts as to its feasibility: one, whether the gentleman proposed would be adequate to the task; the other, whether he would be willing to undertake it.

In the midst of her meditations on this matter, the dame was interrupted by the entrance of certain claimants on her hospitality; and Dummie soon after taking his leave, the suspense of Mrs. Lobkins's mind touching the education of little Paul remained the whole of that day and night utterly unrelieved.

¹ Transported for burglary.

CHAPTER III.

I own that I am envious of the pleasure you will have in finding yourself more learned than other boys, — even those who are older than yourself. What honour this will do you! What distinctions, what applauses will follow wherever you go! — LORD CHESTERFIELD: *Letters to his Son*.

Example, my boy, — example is worth a thousand precepts.

MAXIMILIAN SOLEMN.

TARPEIA was crushed beneath the weight of ornaments. The language of the vulgar is a sort of Tarpeia. We have therefore relieved it of as many gems as we were able, and in the foregoing scene presented it to the gaze of our readers *simplex munditiis*. Nevertheless, we could timidly imagine some gentler beings of the softer sex rather displeased with the tone of the dialogue we have given, did we not recollect how delighted they are with the provincial barbarities of the sister kingdom, whenever they meet them poured over the pages of some Scottish story-teller. As, unhappily for mankind, broad Scotch is not *yet* the universal language of Europe, we suppose our countrywomen will not be much more unacquainted with the dialect of their own lower orders than with that which breathes nasal melodies over the paradise of the North.

It was the next day, at the hour of twilight, when Mrs. Margery Lobkins, after a satisfactory *tête-à-tête* with Mr. MacGrawler, had the happiness of thinking that she had provided a tutor for little Paul. The critic having recited to her a considerable portion of *Propria quæ Maribus*, the good lady had no longer a doubt of his capacities for teaching; and on the other hand, when Mrs. Lobkins entered on the subject of remuneration, the Scotsman professed himself perfectly willing to teach any and every thing that the most exacting guardian could require. It was finally settled that Paul should attend Mr. MacGrawler two hours a day; that Mr

MacGrawler should be entitled to such animal comforts of meat and drink as the Mug afforded, and, moreover, to the weekly stipend of two shillings and sixpence, — the shillings for instruction in the classics, and the sixpence for all other humanities; or, as Mrs. Lobkins expressed it, “two bobs for the Latin, and a sice for the vartue.”

Let not thy mind, gentle reader, censure us for a deviation from probability in making so excellent and learned a gentleman as Mr. Peter MacGrawler the familiar guest of the lady of the Mug. First, thou must know that our story is cast in a period antecedent to the present, and one in which the old jokes against the circumstances of author and of critic had their foundation in truth; secondly, thou must know that by some curious concatenation of circumstances neither bailiff nor bailiff’s man was ever seen within the four walls continent of Mrs. Margery Lobkins; thirdly, the Mug was nearer than any other house of public resort to the abode of the critic; fourthly, it afforded excellent porter; and fifthly, O reader, thou dost Mrs. Margery Lobkins a grievous wrong if thou supposest that her door was only open to those mercurial gentry who are afflicted with the morbid curiosity to pry into the mysteries of their neighbours’ pockets, — other visitors, of fair repute, were not unoften partakers of the good matron’s hospitality; although it must be owned that they generally occupied *the* private room in preference to the public one. And sixthly, sweet reader (we grieve to be so prolix), we would just hint to thee that Mr. MacGrawler was one of those vast-minded sages who, occupied in contemplating morals in the great scale, do not fritter down their intellects by a base attention to minute details. So that if a descendant of Langfanger did sometimes cross the venerable Scot in his visit to the Mug, the apparition did not revolt that benevolent moralist so much as, were it not for the above hint, thy ignorance might lead thee to imagine.

It is said that Athenodorus the Stoic contributed greatly by his conversation to amend the faults of Augustus, and to effect the change visible in that fortunate man after his accession to the Roman empire. If this be true, it may throw a new light

on the character of Augustus, and instead of being the hypocrite, he was possibly the convert. Certain it is that there are few vices which cannot be conquered by wisdom; and yet, melancholy to relate, the instructions of Peter MacGrawler produced but slender amelioration in the habits of the youthful Paul. That ingenious stripling had, we have already seen, under the tuition of Ranting Bob, mastered the art of reading, — nay, he could even construct and link together certain curious pot-hooks, which himself and Mrs. Lobkins were wont graciously to term “writing.” So far, then, the way of MacGrawler was smoothed and prepared.

But, unhappily, all experienced teachers allow that the main difficulty is not to learn, but to unlearn; and the mind of Paul was already occupied by a vast number of heterogeneous miscellanies which stoutly resisted the ingress either of Latin or of virtue. Nothing could wean him from an ominous affection for the history of Richard Turpin; it was to him what, it has been said, the Greek authors should be to the Academician, — a study by day, and a dream by night. He was docile enough during lessons, and sometimes even too quick in conception for the stately march of Mr. MacGrawler’s intellect. But it not unfrequently happened that when that gentleman attempted to rise, he found himself, like the Lady in “Comus,” adhering to —

“A venomed seat
Smeared with gums of glutinous heat;”

or his legs had been secretly united under the table, and the tie was not to be broken without overthrow to the superior powers. These, and various other little sportive machinations wherewith Paul was wont to relieve the monotony of literature, went far to disgust the learned critic with his undertaking. But “the tape” and the treasury of Mrs. Lobkins re-smoothed, as it were, the irritated bristles of his mind, and he continued his labours with this philosophical reflection: “Why fret myself? If a pupil turns out well, it is clearly to the credit of his master; if not, to the disadvantage of himself.” Of course, a similar suggestion never forced itself into the mind

of Dr. Keate.¹ At Eton the very soul of the honest headmaster is consumed by his zeal for the welfare of the little gentlemen in stiff cravats.

But to Paul, who was predestined to enjoy a certain quantum of knowledge, circumstances happened, in the commencement of the second year of his pupilage, which prodigiously accelerated the progress of his scholastic career.

At the apartment of MacGrawler, Paul one morning encountered Mr. Augustus Tomlinson, a young man of great promise, who pursued the peaceful occupation of chronicling in a leading newspaper "Horrid Murders," "Enormous Melons," and "Remarkable Circumstances." This gentleman, having the advantage of some years' seniority over Paul, was slow in unbending his dignity; but observing at last the eager and respectful attention with which the stripling listened to a most veracious detail of five men being inhumanly murdered in Canterbury Cathedral by the Reverend Zedekiah Fooks Barnacle, he was touched by the impression he had created, and shaking Paul graciously by the hand, he told him there was a deal of natural shrewdness in his countenance, and that Mr. Augustus Tomlinson did not doubt but that he (Paul) might have the honour to be murdered himself one of these days. "You understand me," continued Mr. Augustus, — "I mean murdered in effigy, — assassinated in type, — while you yourself, unconscious of the circumstance, are quietly enjoying what you imagine to be your existence. We never kill common persons, — to say truth, our chief spite is against the Church; we destroy bishops by wholesale. Sometimes, indeed, we knock off a leading barrister or so, and express the anguish of the junior counsel at a loss so destructive to their interests. But that is only a stray hit, and the slain barrister often lives to become Attorney-General, renounce Whig principles, and prosecute the very Press that destroyed him. Bishops are our *proper* food; we send them to heaven on a sort of flying griffin, of which the back is an apoplexy, and the wings are puffs. The Bishop of —, whom we despatched in this manner the other day, being rather a facetious person-

¹ A celebrated principal of Eton.

age, wrote to remonstrate with us thereon, observing that though heaven was a very good translation for a bishop, yet that in such cases he preferred 'the original to the translation.' As we murder bishop, so is there another class of persons whom we only afflict with lethiferous diseases. This latter tribe consists of his Majesty and his Majesty's ministers. Whenever we cannot abuse their measures, we always fall foul on their health. Does the king pass any popular law, we immediately insinuate that his constitution is on its last legs. Does the minister act like a man of sense, we instantly observe, with great regret, that his complexion is remarkably pale. There is one manifest advantage in *diseasing* people, instead of absolutely destroying them: the public may flatly contradict us in one case, but it never can in the other; it is easy to prove that a man is alive, but utterly impossible to prove that he is in health. What if some opposing newspaper take up the cudgels in his behalf, and assert that the victim of all Pandora's complaints, whom we send tottering to the grave, passes one half the day in knocking up a 'distinguished company' at a shooting-party, and the other half in outdoing the same 'distinguished company' after dinner? What if the afflicted individual himself write us word that he never was better in his life? We have only mysteriously to shake our heads and observe that to contradict is not to prove, that it is little likely that our authority should have been mistaken, and (we are very fond of an historical comparison), beg our readers to remember that when Cardinal Richelieu was dying, nothing enraged him so much as hinting that he was ill. In short, if Horace is right, we are the very princes of poets; for I dare say, Mr. MacGrawler, that you — and you, too, my little gentleman, perfectly remember the words of the wise old Roman, —

“ ‘ Ille per extantum funem mihi posse videtur
 Ire poeta, meum qui pectus inaniter angit,
 Irritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet.’ ”¹

¹ “He appears to me to be, to the fullest extent, a poet who airily torments my breast, irritates, soothes, fills it with unreal terrors.”

Having uttered this quotation with considerable self-complacency, and thereby entirely completed his conquest over Paul, Mr. Augustus Tomlinson, turning to MacGrawler, concluded his business with that gentleman, — which was of a literary nature, namely, a joint composition against a man who, being under five-and-twenty, and too poor to give dinners, had had the impudence to write a sacred poem. The critics were exceedingly bitter at this; and having very little to say against the poem, the Court journals called the author a “coxcomb,” and the liberal ones “the son of a pantaloon !”

There was an ease, a spirit, a life about Mr. Augustus Tomlinson, which captivated the senses of our young hero; then, too, he was exceedingly smartly attired, — wore red heels and a bag, — had what seemed to Paul quite the air of a “man of fashion;” and, above all, he spouted the Latin with a remarkable grace!

Some days afterwards, MacGrawler sent our hero to Mr. Tomlinson’s lodgings, with his share of the joint abuse upon the poet.

Doubly was Paul’s reverence for Mr. Augustus Tomlinson increased by a sight of his abode. He found him settled in a polite part of the town, in a very spruce parlour, the contents of which manifested the universal genius of the inhabitant. It hath been objected unto us, by a most discerning critic, that we are addicted to the drawing of “universal geniuses.” We plead Not Guilty in former instances; we allow the soft impeachment in the instance of Mr. Augustus Tomlinson. Over his fireplace were arranged boxing-gloves and fencing-foils; on his table lay a cremona and a flageolet. On one side of the wall were shelves containing the Covent Garden Magazine, Burn’s Justice, a pocket Horace, a Prayer-Book, *Excerpta ex Tacito*, a volume of plays, Philosophy made Easy, and a Key to all Knowledge. Furthermore, there were on another table a riding-whip and a driving-whip and a pair of spurs, and three guineas, with a little mountain of loose silver. Mr. Augustus was a tall, fair young man, with a freckled complexion, green eyes and red eyelids, a smiling mouth, rather under-jawed, a sharp nose, and a prodigiously

large pair of ears. He was robed in a green damask dressing-gown; and he received the tender Paul most graciously.

There was something very engaging about our hero. He was not only good-looking, and frank in aspect, but he had that appearance of briskness and intellect which belongs to an embryo rogue. Mr. Augustus Tomlinson professed the greatest regard for him, — asked him if he could box, made him put on a pair of gloves, and very condescendingly knocked him down three times successively. Next he played him, both upon his flageolet and his cremona, some of the most modish airs. Moreover, he sang him a little song of his own composing. He then, taking up the driving-whip, flanked a fly from the opposite wall, and throwing himself (naturally fatigued with his numerous exertions) on his sofa, observed, in a careless tone, that he and his friend Lord Dunshunner were universally esteemed the best whips in the metropolis. “I,” quoth Mr. Augustus, “am the best on the road; but my lord is a devil at turning a corner.”

Paul, who had hitherto lived too unsophisticated a life to be aware of the importance of which a lord would naturally be in the eyes of Mr. Augustus Tomlinson, was not so much struck with the grandeur of the connection as the murderer of the journals had expected. He merely observed, by way of compliment, that Mr. Augustus and his companion seemed to be “rolling kiddies.”

A little displeased with this metaphorical remark, — for it may be observed that “rolling kiddy” is, among the learned in such lore, the customary expression for “a smart thief,” — the universal Augustus took that liberty to which by his age and station, so much superior to those of Paul, he imagined himself entitled, and gently reproved our hero for his indiscriminate use of flash phrases.

“A lad of your parts,” said he, — “for I see you are clever, by your eye, — ought to be ashamed of using such vulgar expressions. Have a nobler spirit, a loftier emulation, Paul, than that which distinguishes the little ragamuffins of the street. Know that in this country genius and learning carry everything before them; and if you behave yourself properly,

you may, one day or another, be as high in the world as myself."

At this speech Paul looked wistfully round the spruce parlour, and thought what a fine thing it would be to be lord of such a domain, together with the appliances of flageolet and cremona, boxing-gloves, books, fly-flanking flagellum, three guineas, with the little mountain of silver, and the reputation—shared only with Lord Dunshunner—of being the best whip in London.

"Yes," continued Tomlinson, with conscious pride, "I owe my rise to myself. Learning is better than house and land. 'Doctrina sed vim,' etc. You know what old Horace says? Why, sir, you would not believe it; but I was the man who killed his Majesty the King of Sardinia in our yesterday's paper. Nothing is too arduous for genius. Fag hard, my boy, and you may rival (for the thing, though difficult, may not be impossible) Augustus Tomlinson!"

At the conclusion of this harangue, a knock at the door being heard, Paul took his departure, and met in the hall a fine-looking person dressed in the height of the fashion, and wearing a pair of prodigiously large buckles in his shoes. Paul looked, and his heart swelled. "I may rival," thought he,—"those were his very words,—I may rival (for the thing, though difficult, is not impossible) Augustus Tomlinson!" Absorbed in meditation, he went silently home. The next day the memoirs of the great Turpin were committed to the flames, and it was noticeable that henceforth Paul observed a choicer propriety of words, that he assumed a more refined air of dignity, and that he paid considerably more attention than heretofore to the lessons of Mr. Peter MacGrawler. Although it must be allowed that our young hero's progress in the learned languages was not astonishing, yet an early passion for reading, growing stronger and stronger by application, repaid him at last with a tolerable knowledge of the mother-tongue. We must, however, add that his more favourite and cherished studies were scarcely of that nature which a prudent preceptor would have greatly commended. They lay chiefly among novels, plays, and poetry,—which last he

affected to that degree that he became somewhat of a poet himself. Nevertheless these literary avocations, profitless as they seemed, gave a certain refinement to his tastes which they were not likely otherwise to have acquired at the Mug; and while they aroused his ambition to see something of the gay life they depicted, they imparted to his temper a tone of enterprise and of thoughtless generosity which perhaps contributed greatly to counteract those evil influences towards petty vice to which the examples around him must have exposed his tender youth. But, alas! a great disappointment to Paul's hope of assistance and companionship in his literary labours befell him. Mr. Augustus Tomlinson, one bright morning, disappeared, leaving word with his numerous friends that he was going to accept a lucrative situation in the North of England. Notwithstanding the shock this occasioned to the affectionate heart and aspiring temper of our friend Paul, it abated not his ardour in that field of science which it seemed that the distinguished absentee had so successfully cultivated. By little and little, he possessed himself (in addition to the literary stores we have alluded to) of all it was in the power of the wise and profound Peter MacGrawler to impart unto him; and at the age of sixteen he began (oh the presumption of youth!) to fancy himself more learned than his master.

CHAPTER IV.

HE had now become a young man of extreme fashion, and as much *répandu* in society as the utmost and most exigent coveter of London celebrity could desire. He was, of course, a member of the clubs, etc. He was, in short, of that oft-described set before whom all minor beaux sink into insignificance, or among whom they eventually obtain a subaltern *grade*, by a sacrifice of a due portion of their fortune. — *Almack's Revisited*.

By the soul of the great Malebranche, who made "A Search after Truth," and discovered everything beautiful except that which he searched for, — by the soul of the great Malebranche.

whom Bishop Berkeley found suffering under an inflammation in the lungs, and very obligingly *talked to death* (an instance of conversational powers worthy the envious emulation of all great metaphysicians and arguers), — by the soul of that illustrious man, it is amazing to us what a number of truths there are broken up into little fragments, and scattered here and there through the world. What a magnificent museum a man might make of the precious minerals, if he would but go out with his basket under his arm, and his eyes about him! We ourselves picked up this very day a certain small piece of truth, with which we propose to explain to thee, fair reader, a sinister turn in the fortunes of Paul.

“Wherever,” says a living sage, “you see dignity, you may be sure there is expense requisite to support it.”¹ So was it with Paul. A young gentleman who was heir-presumptive to the Mug, and who enjoyed a handsome person with a cultivated mind, was necessarily of a certain station of society, and an object of respect in the eyes of the manœuvring mammas of the vicinity of Thames Court. Many were the parties of pleasure to Deptford and Greenwich which Paul found himself compelled to attend; and we need not refer our readers to novels upon fashionable life to inform them that in good society the *gentlemen always pay for the ladies!* Nor was this all the expense to which his expectations exposed him. A gentleman could scarcely attend these elegant festivities without devoting some little attention to his dress; and a fashionable tailor plays the deuce with one’s yearly allowance.

We who reside, be it known to you, reader, in Little Britany are not very well acquainted with the manners of the better classes in St. James’s. But there was one great vice among the fine people about Thames Court which we make no doubt does not exist anywhere else, — namely, these fine people were always in an agony to seem finer than they were; and the more airs a gentleman or a lady gave him or her self, the more important they became. Joe, the dog’s-meat man, had indeed got into society entirely from a knack of saying impertinent things to everybody; and the smartest exclusives

¹ Popular Fallacies.

of the place, who seldom visited any one where there was not a silver teapot, used to think Joe had a great deal in him because he trundled his cart with his head in the air, and one day gave the very beadle of the parish "the cut direct."

Now this desire to be so exceedingly fine not only made the society about Thames Court unpleasant, but expensive. Every one vied with his neighbour; and as the spirit of rivalry is particularly strong in youthful bosoms, we can scarcely wonder that it led Paul into many extravagances. The evil of all circles that profess to be select is high play; and the reason is obvious: persons who have the power to bestow on another an advantage he covets would rather sell it than give it; and Paul, gradually increasing in popularity and *ton*, found himself, in spite of his classical education, no match for the finished, or, rather, finishing gentlemen with whom he began to associate. His first admittance into the select coterie of these men of the world was formed at the house of Bachelor Bill, a person of great notoriety among that portion of the *élite* which emphatically entitles itself "Flash." However, as it is our rigid intention in this work to portray *at length* no episodical characters whatsoever, we can afford our readers but a slight and rapid sketch of Bachelor Bill.

This personage was of Devonshire extraction. His mother had kept the pleasantest public-house in town, and at her death Bill succeeded to her property and popularity. All the young ladies in the neighbourhood of Fiddler's Row, where he resided, set their caps at him: all the most fashionable *prigs*, or *tobymen*, sought to get him into their set; and the most crack *blowen* in London would have given her ears at any time for a loving word from Bachelor Bill. But Bill was a long-headed, prudent fellow, and of a remarkably cautious temperament. He avoided marriage and friendship; namely, he was neither plundered nor cornuted. He was a tall, aristocratic *cove*, of a devilish neat address, and very gallant, in an honest way, to the *blowens*. Like most single men, being very much the gentleman so far as money was concerned, he gave them plenty of "feeds," and from time to time a

very agreeable *hop*. His *bingo*¹ was unexceptionable; and as for his *stark-naked*,² it was voted the most brilliant thing in nature. In a very short time, by his blows-out and his bachelorship, — for single men always arrive at the apex of *haut ton* more easily than married, — he became the very glass of fashion; and many were the tight apprentices, even at the west end of the town, who used to turn back in admiration of Bachelor Bill, when of a Sunday afternoon he drove down his varment gig to his snug little box on the borders of Turnham Green. Bill's happiness was not, however, wholly without alloy. The ladies of pleasure are always so excessively angry when a man does not make love to them, that there is nothing they will not say against him; and the fair matrons in the vicinity of Fiddler's Row spread all manner of unfounded reports against poor Bachelor Bill. By degrees, however, — for, as Tacitus has said, doubtless with a prophetic eye to Bachelor Bill, "the truth gains by delay," — these reports began to die insensibly away; and Bill now waxing near to the confines of middle age, his friends comfortably settled for him that he would be Bachelor Bill all his life. For the rest, he was an excellent fellow, — gave his broken victuals to the poor, professed a liberal turn of thinking, and in all the quarrels among the blowens (your crack blowens are a quarrelsome set!) always took part with the weakest. Although Bill affected to be very select in his company, he was never forgetful of his old friends; and Mrs. Margery Lobkins having been very good to him when he was a little boy in a skeleton jacket, he invariably sent her a card to his *soirées*. The good lady, however, had not of late years deserted her chimney-corner. Indeed, the racket of fashionable life was too much for her nerves; and the invitation had become a customary form not expected to be acted upon, but not a whit the less regularly used for that reason. As Paul had now attained his sixteenth year, and was a fine, handsome lad, the dame thought he would make an excellent representative of the Mug's mistress; and that, for her *protégé*, a ball at Bill's house would be no bad commencement of "Life in

¹ Brandy.² Gin.

London." Accordingly, she intimated to the Bachelor a wish to that effect; and Paul received the following invitation from Bill:—

"Mr. William Duke gives a hop and feed in a quiet way on Monday next, and *hops* Mr. Paul Lobkins will be of the party. N.B. Gentlemen is expected to come in pumps."

When Paul entered, he found Bachelor Bill leading off the ball to the tune of "Drops of Brandy," with a young lady to whom, because she had been a strolling player, the Ladies Patronesses of Fiddler's Row had thought proper to behave with a very cavalier civility. The good Bachelor had no notion, as he expressed it, of such tantrums, and he caused it to be circulated among the finest of the *blowens*, that he expected all who kicked their heels at his house would behave decent and polite to young Mrs. Dot. This intimation, conveyed to the ladies with all that insinuating polish for which Bachelor Bill was so remarkable, produced a notable effect; and Mrs. Dot, being now led off by the flash Bachelor, was overpowered with civilities the rest of the evening.

When the dance was ended, Bill very politely shook hands with Paul, and took an early opportunity of introducing him to some of the most "noted characters" of the town. Among these were the smart Mr. Allfair, the insinuating Henry Finish, the merry Jack Hookey, the knowing Charles Trywit, and various others equally noted for their skill in living handsomely upon their own brains, and the personals of other people. To say truth, Paul, who at that time was an honest lad, was less charmed than he had anticipated by the conversation of these chevaliers of industry. He was more pleased with the clever though self-sufficient remarks of a gentleman with a remarkably fine head of hair, and whom we would more impressively than the rest introduce to our reader under the appellation of Mr. Edward Pepper, generally termed Long Ned. As this worthy was destined afterwards to be an intimate associate of Paul, our main reason for attending the hop at Bachelor Bill's is to note, as the importance of the

event deserves, the epoch of the commencement of their acquaintance.

Long Ned and Paul happened to sit next to each other at supper, and they conversed together so amicably that Paul, in the hospitality of his heart, expressed a hope that he should see Mr. Pepper at the Mug!

"Mug, — Mug!" repeated Pepper, half shutting his eyes, with the air of a dandy about to be impertinent; ah, the name of a chapel, is it not? There's a sect called Muggletonians, I think?"

"As to that," said Paul, colouring at this insinuation against the Mug, "Mrs. Lobkins has no more religion than her betters; but the Mug is a very excellent house, and frequented by the best possible company."

"Don't doubt it!" said Ned. "Remember now that I was once there, and saw one Dummie Dunnaker, — is not that the name? I recollect some years ago, when I first came out, that Dummie and I had an adventure together; to tell you the truth, it was not the sort of thing I would do now. But — would you believe it, Mr. Paul? — this pitiful fellow was quite rude to me the only time I ever met him since; that is to say, the only time I ever entered the Mug. I have no notion of such airs in a merchant, — a merchant of rags! Those commercial fellows are getting quite insufferable."

"You surprise me," said Paul. "Poor Dummie is the last man to be rude; he is as civil a creature as ever lived."

"Or sold a rag," said Ned. "Possibly! Don't doubt his amiable qualities in the least. Pass the bingo, my good fellow. Stupid stuff, this dancing!"

"Devilish stupid!" echoed Harry Finish, across the table. "Suppose we adjourn to Fish Lane, and rattle the ivories! What say you, Mr. Lobkins?"

Afraid of the "ton's stern laugh, which scarce the proud philosopher can scorn," and not being very partial to dancing, Paul assented to the proposition; and a little party, consisting of Harry Finish, Allfair, Long Ned, and Mr. Hookey, adjourned to Fish Lane, where there was a club, celebrated among men who live by their wits, at which "lush" and

"baccy" were gratuitously sported in the most magnificent manner. Here the evening passed away very delightfully, and Paul went home without a "brad" in his pocket.

From that time Paul's visits to Fish Lane became unfortunately regular; and in a very short period, we grieve to say, Paul became that distinguished character, a gentleman of three outs, — "out of pocket, out of elbows, and out of credit." The only two persons whom he found willing *to accommodate him with a slight loan*, as the advertisements signed X. Y. have it, were Mr. Dummie Dunnaker and Mr. Pepper, surnamed the Long. The latter, however, while he obliged the heir to the Mug, never condescended to enter that noted place of resort; and the former, whenever he good-naturedly opened his purse-strings, did it with a hearty caution to shun the acquaintance of Long Ned, — "a parson," said Dummie, "of very dangerous morals, and not by no manner of means a fit 'sociate for a young gemman of cracter like leetle Paul!" So earnest was this caution, and so especially pointed at Long Ned, — although the company of Mr. Allfair or Mr. Finish might be said to be no less prejudicial, — that it is probable that stately fastidiousness of manner which Lord Normanby rightly observes, in one of his excellent novels, makes so many enemies in the world, and which sometimes characterized the behaviour of Long Ned, especially towards the men of commerce, was a main reason why Dummie was so acutely and peculiarly alive to the immoralities of that lengthy gentleman. At the same time we must observe that when Paul, remembering what Pepper had said respecting his early adventure with Mr. Dunnaker, repeated it to the merchant, Dummie could not conceal a certain confusion, though he merely remarked, with a sort of laugh, that it was not worth speaking about; and it appeared evident to Paul that something unpleasant to the man of rags, which was not shared by the unconscious Pepper, lurked in the reminiscence of their past acquaintance. Howbeit, the circumstance glided from Paul's attention the moment afterwards; and he paid, we are concerned to say, equally little heed to the cautions against Ned with which Dummie regaled him.

Perhaps (for we must now direct a glance towards his domestic concerns) one great cause which drove Paul to Fish Lane was the uncomfortable life he led at home. For though Mrs. Lobkins was extremely fond of her *protégé*, yet she was possessed, as her customers emphatically remarked, "of the devil's own temper;" and her native coarseness never having been softened by those pictures of gay society which had, in many a novel and comic farce, refined the temperament of the romantic Paul, her manner of venting her maternal reproaches was certainly not a little revolting to a lad of some delicacy of feeling. Indeed, it often occurred to him to leave her house altogether, and seek his fortunes alone, after the manner of the ingenious Gil Blas or the enterprising Roderick Random; and this idea, though conquered and reconquered, gradually swelled and increased at his heart, even as swelleth that hairy ball found in the stomach of some suffering heifer after its decease. Among these projects of enterprise the reader will hereafter notice that an early vision of the Green Forest Cave, in which Turpin was accustomed, with a friend, a ham, and a wife, to conceal himself, flitted across his mind. At this time he did not, perhaps, incline to the mode of life practised by the hero of the roads; but he certainly clung not the less fondly to the notion of the cave.

The melancholy flow of our hero's life was now, however, about to be diverted by an unexpected turn, and the crude thoughts of boyhood to burst, "like Ghilan's giant palm," into the fruit of a manly resolution.

Among the prominent features of Mrs. Lobkins's mind was a sovereign contempt for the unsuccessful. The imprudence and ill-luck of Paul occasioned her as much scorn as compassion; and when for the third time within a week he stood, with a rueful visage and with vacant pockets, by the dame's great chair, requesting an additional supply, the tides of her wrath swelled into overflow.

"Look you, my kinchin cove," said she, — and in order to give peculiar dignity to her aspect, she put on while she spoke a huge pair of tin spectacles, — "if so be as how you goes for to think as how I shall go for to supply your wicious necessi-

ties, you will find yourself planted in Queer Street. Blow me tight, if I gives you another mag."

"But I owe Long Ned a guinea," said Paul; "and Dummie Dunnaker lent me three crowns. It ill becomes your heir apparent, my dear dame, to fight shy of his debts of honour."

"Taradiddle, don't think for to wheedle me with your debts and your honour," said the dame, in a passion. "Long Ned is as long in the forks [fingers] as he is in the back; may Old Harry fly off with him! And as for Dummie Dunnaker, I wonders how you, brought up such a swell, and blest with the very best of hedications, can think of putting up with such vulgar 'sociates. I tells you what, Paul, you'll please to break with them, smack and at once, or devil a brad you'll ever get from Peg Lobkins." So saying, the old lady turned round in her chair, and helped herself to a pipe of tobacco.

Paul walked twice up and down the apartment, and at last stopped opposite the dame's chair. He was a youth of high spirit; and though he was warm-hearted, and had a love for Mrs. Lobkins, which her care and affection for him well deserved, yet he was rough in temper, and not constantly smooth in speech. It is true that his heart smote him afterwards, whenever he had said anything to annoy Mrs. Lobkins, and he was always the first to seek a reconciliation; but warm words produce cold respect, and sorrow for the past is not always efficacious in amending the future. Paul then, puffed up with the vanity of his genteel education, and the friendship of Long Ned (who went to Ranelagh, and wore silver clocked stockings), stopped opposite to Mrs. Lobkins's chair, and said with great solemnity, —

"Mr. Pepper, madam, says very properly that I must have money to support myself like a gentleman; and as you won't give it me, I am determined, with many thanks for your past favours, to throw myself on the world, and seek my fortune."

If Paul was of no oily and bland temper, Dame Margaret Lobkins, it has been seen, had no advantage on that score. (We dare say the reader has observed that nothing so enrages persons on whom one depends as any expressed determination

of seeking independence.) Gazing therefore for one moment at the open but resolute countenance of Paul, while all the blood of her veins seemed gathering in fire and scarlet to her enlarging cheeks, Dame Lobkins said, —

“Ifeaks, Master Pride-in-duds! seek your fortune yourself, will you? This comes of my bringing you up, and letting you eat the bread of idleness and charity, you toad of a thousand! Take that and be d—d to you!” and, suiting the action to the word, the tube which she had withdrawn from her mouth in order to utter her gentle rebuke whizzed through the air, grazed Paul’s cheek, and finished its earthly career by coming in violent contact with the right eye of Dummie Dunnaker, who at that exact moment entered the room.

Paul had winced for a moment to avoid the missive; in the next he stood perfectly upright. His cheeks glowed, his chest swelled; and the entrance of Dummie Dunnaker, who was thus made the spectator of the affront he had received, stirred his blood into a deeper anger and a more bitter self-humiliation. All his former resolutions of departure, all the hard words, the coarse allusions, the practical insults he had at any time received, rushed upon him at once. He merely cast one look at the old woman, whose rage was now half subsided, and turned slowly and in silence to the door.

There is often something alarming in an occurrence merely because it is that which we least expect. The astute Mrs. Lobkins, remembering the hardy temper and fiery passions of Paul, had expected some burst of rage, some vehement reply; and when she caught with one wandering eye his parting look, and saw him turn so passively and mutely to the door, her heart misgave her, she raised herself from her chair, and made towards him. Unhappily for her chance of reconciliation, she had that day quaffed more copiously of the bowl than usual; and the signs of intoxication visible in her uncertain gait, her meaningless eye, her vacant leer, her ruby cheek, all inspired Paul with feelings which at the moment converted resentment into something very much like aversion. He sprang from her grasp to the threshold.

“Where be you going, you imp of the world?” cried the

dame. "Get in with you, and say no more on the matter; be a bob-cull,—drop the bullies, and you shall have the blunt!"

But Paul heeded not this invitation.

"I will eat the bread of idleness and charity no longer," said he, sullenly. "Good-by; and if ever I can pay you what I have cost you, I will."

He turned away as he spoke; and the dame, kindling with resentment at his unseemly return to her proffered kindness, hallooed after him, and bade that dark-coloured gentleman who keeps the *fire-office* below go along with him.

Swelling with anger, pride, shame, and a half-joyous feeling of emancipated independence, Paul walked on, he knew not whither, with his head in the air, and his legs marshalling themselves into a military gait of defiance. He had not proceeded far before he heard his name uttered behind him; he turned, and saw the rueful face of Dummie Dunnaker.

Very inoffensively had that respectable person been employed during the last part of the scene we have described in caressing his afflicted eye, and muttering philosophical observations on the danger incurred by all those who are acquainted with ladies of a choleric temperament; when Mrs. Lobkins, turning round after Paul's departure, and seeing the pitiful person of that Dummie Dunnaker, whose name she remembered Paul had mentioned in his opening speech, and whom, therefore, with an illogical confusion of ideas, she considered a party in the late dispute, exhausted upon him all that rage which it was necessary for her comfort that she should unburden somewhere.

She seized the little man by the collar,—the tenderest of all places in gentlemen similarly circumstanced with regard to the ways of life,—and giving him a blow, which took effect on his other and hitherto undamaged eye, cried out,—

"I'll teach you, you blood-sucker [that is, parasite], to sponge upon those as has expectations! I'll teach you to cozen the heir of the Mug, you snivelling, whey-faced ghost of a farthing rushlight! What! you'll lend my Paul three crowns, will you, when you knows as how you told me you could not pay me a pitiful tizzy? Oh, you're a queer one, I

warrants; but you won't queer Margery Lobkins. Out of my ken, you cur of the mange! — out of my ken; and if ever I claps my sees on you again, or if ever I knows as how you makes a flat of my Paul, blow me tight but I'll weave you a hempen collar, — I'll hang you, you dog, I will. What! you will answer me, will you? Oh, you viper, budge and begone!"

It was in vain that Dummie protested his innocence. A violent *coup-de-pied* broke off all further parlanche. He made a clear house of the Mug; and the landlady thereof, tottering back to her elbow-chair, sought out another pipe, and, like all imaginative persons when the world goes wrong with them, consoled herself for the absence of realities by the creations of smoke.

Meanwhile Dummie Dunnaker, muttering and murmuring bitter fancies, overtook Paul, and accused that youth of having been the occasion of the injuries he had just undergone. Paul was not at that moment in the humour best adapted for the patient bearing of accusations. He answered Mr. Dunnaker very shortly; and that respectable individual, still smarting under his bruises, replied with equal tartness. Words grew high, and at length Paul, desirous of concluding the conference, clenched his fist, and told the redoubted Dummie that he would "knock him down." There is something peculiarly harsh and stunning in those three hard, wiry, sturdy, stubborn monosyllables. Their very sound makes you double your fist if you are a hero, or your pace if you are a peaceable man. They produced an instant effect upon Dummie Dunnaker, aided as they were by the effect of an athletic and youthful figure, already fast approaching to the height of six feet, a flushed cheek, and an eye that bespoke both passion and resolution. The rag-merchant's voice sank at once, and with the countenance of a wronged Cassius he whimpered forth, —

"Knock me down? O leetle Paul, vot vicked vhidz are those! Vot! Dummie Dunnaker, as has dandled you on his knee mony's a time and oft! Vy, the cove's 'art is as 'ard as junk, and as proud as a gardener's dog vith a nosegay tied

to his tail." This pathetic remonstrance softened Paul's anger.

"Well, Dummie," said he, laughing, "I did not mean to hurt you, and there's an end of it; and I am very sorry for the dame's ill-conduct; and so I wish you a good-morning."

"Vy, veré be you trotting to, leetle Paul?" said Dummie, grasping him by the tail of the coat.

"The deuce a bit I know," answered our hero; "but I think I shall drop a call on Long Ned."

"Avast there!" said Dummie, speaking under his breath; "if so be as you von't blab, I'll tell you a bit of a secret. I heered as 'ow Long Ned started for Hampshire this werry morning on a toby consarn!"¹

"Ha!" said Paul, "then hang me if I know what to do!"

As he uttered these words, a more thorough sense of his destitution (if he persevered in leaving the Mug) than he had hitherto felt rushed upon him; for Paul had designed for a while to throw himself on the hospitality of his Patagonian friend, and now that he found that friend was absent from London and on so dangerous an expedition, he was a little puzzled what to do with that treasure of intellect and wisdom which he carried about upon his legs. Already he had acquired sufficient penetration (for Charles Trywit and Harry Finish were excellent masters for initiating a man into the knowledge of the world) to perceive that a person, however admirable may be his qualities, does not readily find a welcome without a penny in his pocket. In the neighbourhood of Thames Court he had, indeed, many acquaintances; but the fineness of his language, acquired from his education, and the elegance of his air, in which he attempted to blend in happy association the gallant effrontery of Mr. Long Ned with the graceful negligence of Mr. Augustus Tomlinson, had made him many enemies among those acquaintances; and he was not willing — so great was our hero's pride — to throw himself on the chance of their welcome, or to publish, as it were, his exiled and crestfallen state. As for those boon companions who had assisted him in making a wilderness of his

¹ Highway expedition.

pockets, he had already found that that was the only species of assistance which they were willing to render him. In a word, he could not for the life of him conjecture in what quarter he should find the benefits of bed and board. While he stood with his finger to his lip, undecided and musing, but fully resolved at least on one thing, — not to return to the Mug, — little Dummie, who was a good-natured fellow at the bottom, peered up in his face, and said, —

“Vy, Paul, my kid, you looks down in the chops; cheer up, — care killed a cat!”

Observing that this appropriate and encouraging fact of natural history did not lessen the cloud upon Paul’s brow, the acute Dummie Dunnaker proceeded at once to the grand panacea for all evils, in his own profound estimation.

“Paul, my ben cull,” said he, with a knowing wink, and nudging the young gentleman in the left side, “vot do you say to a drop o’ blue ruin? or, as you likes to be conish [genteel], I does n’t care if I sports you a glass of port!” While Dunnaker was uttering this invitation, a sudden reminiscence flashed across Paul: he bethought him at once of MacGrawler; and he resolved forthwith to repair to the abode of that illustrious sage, and petition at least for accommodation for the approaching night. So soon as he had come to this determination, he shook off the grasp of the amiable Dummie, and refusing with many thanks his hospitable invitation, requested him to abstract from the dame’s house, and lodge within his own until called for, such articles of linen and clothing as belonged to Paul and could easily be laid hold of, during one of the matron’s evening *siestas*, by the shrewd Dunnaker. The merchant promised that the commission should be speedily executed; and Paul, shaking hands with him, proceeded to the mansion of MacGrawler.

We must now go back somewhat in the natural course of our narrative, and observe that among the minor causes which had conspired with the great one of gambling to bring our excellent Paul to his present situation, was his intimacy with MacGrawler; for when Paul’s increasing years and roving habits had put an end to the sage’s instructions, there was

thereby lopped off from the preceptor's finances the weekly sum of two shillings and sixpence, as well as the freedom of the dame's cellar and larder; and as, in the reaction of feeling, and the perverse course of human affairs, people generally repent the most of those actions once the most ardently incurred, so poor Mrs. Lobkins, imagining that Paul's irregularities were entirely owing to the knowledge he had acquired from MacGrawler's instructions, grievously upbraided herself for her former folly in seeking for a superior education for her *protégé*; nay, she even vented upon the sacred head of MacGrawler himself her dissatisfaction at the results of his instructions. In like manner, when a man who can spell comes to be hanged, the anti-educationists accuse the spelling-book of his murder. High words between the admirer of ignorant innocence and the propagator of intellectual science ensued, which ended in MacGrawler's final expulsion from the Mug.

There are some young gentlemen of the present day addicted to the adoption of Lord Byron's poetry, with the alteration of new rhymes, who are pleased graciously to inform us that they are born to be the ruin of all those who love them, — an interesting fact, doubtless, but which they might as well keep to themselves. It would seem by the contents of this chapter as if the same misfortune were destined to Paul. The exile of MacGrawler, the insults offered to Dummie Dunnaker, — alike occasioned by him, — appear to sanction that opinion. Unfortunately, though Paul was a poet, he was not much of a sentimentalist; and he has never given us the edifying ravings of his remorse on those subjects. But MacGrawler, like Dunnaker, was resolved that our hero should perceive the curse of his fatality; and as he still retained some influence over the mind of his quondam pupil, his accusations against Paul, as the origin of his banishment, were attended with a greater success than were the complaints of Dummie Dunnaker on a similar calamity. Paul, who, like most people who are good for nothing, had an excellent heart, was exceedingly grieved at MacGrawler's banishment on his account; and he endeavoured to atone for it by such pecuniary consolations as he was enabled to offer. These MacGrawler (purely, we

may suppose, from a benevolent desire to lessen the boy's remorse) scrupled not to accept; and thus, so similar often are the effects of virtue and of vice, the exemplary MacGrawler conspired with the unprincipled Long Ned and the heartless Henry Finish in producing that unenviable state of vacuity which now saddened over the pockets of Paul.

As our hero was slowly walking towards the sage's abode, depending on his gratitude and friendship for a temporary shelter, one of those lightning flashes of thought which often illumine the profoundest abyss of affliction darted across his mind. Recalling the image of the critic, he remembered that he had seen that ornament of "The Asinæum" receive sundry sums for his critical lucubrations.

"Why," said Paul, seizing on that fact, and stopping short in the street, — "why should I not turn critic myself?"

The only person to whom one ever puts a question with a tolerable certainty of receiving a satisfactory answer is one's self. The moment Paul started this luminous suggestion, it appeared to him that he had discovered the mines of Potosi. Burning with impatience to discuss with the great MacGrawler the feasibility of his project, he quickened his pace almost into a run, and in a very few minutes, having only overthrown one chimney-sweeper and two apple-women by the way, he arrived at the sage's door.

CHAPTER V.

YE realms yet unrevealed to human sight,
 Ye canes athwart the hapless hands that write,
 Ye critic chiefs, — permit me to relate
 The mystic wonders of your silent state!

VIRGIL, *Æneid*, book vi.

FORTUNE had smiled upon Mr. MacGrawler since he first undertook the tuition of Mrs. Lobkins's *protégé*. He now inhabited a second-floor, and defied the sheriff and his evil

spirits. It was at the dusk of evening that Paul found him at home and alone.

Before the mighty man stood a pot of London porter; a candle, with an unregarded wick, shed its solitary light upon his labours; and an infant cat played sportively at his learned feet, beguiling the weary moments with the remnants of the spiral cap wherewith, instead of laurel, the critic had hitherto nightly adorned his brows.

So soon as MacGrawler, piercing through the gloomy mist which hung about the chamber, perceived the person of the intruder, a frown settled upon his brow.

"Have I not told you, youngster," he growled, "never to enter a gentleman's room without knocking? I tell you, sir, that manners are no less essential to human happiness than virtue; wherefore, never disturb a gentleman in his avocations, and sit yourself down without molesting the cat!"

Paul, who knew that his respected tutor disliked any one to trace the source of the wonderful spirit which he infused into his critical compositions, affected not to perceive the pewter Hippocrene, and with many apologies for his want of preparatory politeness, seated himself as directed. It was then that the following edifying conversation ensued.

"The ancients," quoth Paul, "were very great men, Mr. MacGrawler."

"They were so, sir," returned the critic; "we make it a rule in our profession to assert that fact."

"But, sir," said Paul, "they were wrong now and then."

"Never, Ignoramus; never!"

"They praised poverty, Mr. MacGrawler!" said Paul, with a sigh.

"Hem!" quoth the critic, a little staggered; but presently recovering his characteristic acumen, he observed, "It is true, Paul; but that was the poverty of other people."

There was a slight pause. "Criticism," renewed Paul, "must be a most difficult art."

"A-hem! And what art is there, sir, that is not difficult, — at least, to become master of?"

"True," sighed Paul; "or else —"

"Or else what, boy?" repeated Mr. MacGrawler, seeing that Paul hesitated, either from fear of his superior knowledge, as the critic's vanity suggested, or from (what was equally likely) want of a word to express his meaning.

"Why, I was thinking, sir," said Paul, with that desperate courage which gives a distinct and loud intonation to the voice of all who set, or think they set, their fate upon a cast, — "I was thinking that I should like to become a critic myself!"

"W-h-e-w!" whistled MacGrawler, elevating his eyebrows; "w-h-e-w! great ends have come of less beginnings!"

Encouraging as this assertion was, coming as it did from the lips of so great a man and so great a critic, at the very moment too when nothing short of an anathema against arrogance and presumption was expected to issue from those portals of wisdom, yet such is the fallacy of all human hopes, that Paul's of a surety would have been a little less elated, had he, at the same time his ears drank in the balm of these gracious words, been able to have dived into the source whence they emanated.

"Know thyself!" was a precept the sage MacGrawler had endeavoured to obey; consequently the result of his obedience was that even by himself he was better known than trusted. Whatever he might appear to others, he had in reality no vain faith in the infallibility of his own talents and resources; as well might a butcher deem himself a perfect anatomist from the frequent amputation of legs of mutton, as the critic of "The Asinæum" have laid "the flattering unction to his soul" that he was really skilled in the art of criticism, or even acquainted with one of its commonest rules, because he could with all speed cut up and disjoint any work, from the smallest to the greatest, from the most superficial to the most superior; and thus it was that he never had the want of candour to deceive *himself* as to his own talents. Paul's wish therefore was no sooner expressed than a vague but golden scheme of future profit illumined the brain of MacGrawler, — in a word, he resolved that Paul should henceforward share the labour of his critiques; and that he, MacGrawler, should

receive the whole profits in return for the honour thereby conferred on his coadjutor.

Looking therefore at our hero with a benignant air, Mr. MacGrawler thus continued:—

“Yes, I repeat, — great ends have come from less beginnings! Rome was not built in a day; and I, Paul, I myself was not always the editor of ‘The Asinæum.’ You say wisely, criticism is a great science, a very great science; and it may be divided into three branches, — namely, ‘to tickle, to slash, and to plaster.’ In each of these three I believe without vanity I am a profound adept! I will initiate you into all. Your labours shall begin this very evening. I have three works on my table; they must be despatched by to-morrow night. I will take the most arduous; I abandon to you the others. The three consist of a Romance, an Epic in twelve books, and an Inquiry into the Human Mind, in three volumes. I, Paul, will tickle the Romance; you this very evening shall plaster the Epic, and slash the Inquiry!”

“Heavens, Mr. MacGrawler!” cried Paul, in consternation, “what do you mean? I should never be able to read an epic in twelve books, and I should fall asleep in the first page of the Inquiry. No, no, leave me the Romance, and take the other two under your own protection!”

Although great genius is always benevolent, Mr. MacGrawler could not restrain a smile of ineffable contempt at the simplicity of his pupil.

“Know, young gentleman,” said he, solemnly, “that the Romance in question must be tickled; it is not given to raw beginners to conquer that great mystery of our science.”

“Before we proceed further, explain the words of the art,” said Paul, impatiently.

“Listen, then,” rejoined MacGrawler; and as he spoke, the candle cast an awful glimmering on his countenance. “To slash is, speaking grammatically, to employ the accusative, or accusing case; you must cut up your book right and left, top and bottom, root and branch. To plaster a book is to employ the dative, or giving case; and you must bestow on the work all the superlatives in the language, — you must lay on your

praise thick and thin, and not leave a crevice untrowelled. But to tickle, sir, is a comprehensive word, and it comprises all the infinite varieties that fill the interval between slashing and plastering. This is the nicety of the art, and you can only acquire it by practice; a few examples will suffice to give you an idea of its delicacy.

“We will begin with the encouraging tickle: ‘Although this work is full of faults, — though the characters are unnatural, the plot utterly improbable, the thoughts hackneyed, and the style ungrammatical, — yet we would by no means discourage the author from proceeding; and in the mean while we confidently recommend his work to the attention of the reading public.’”

“Take, now, the advising tickle: ‘There is a good deal of merit in these little volumes, although we must regret the evident haste in which they were written. The author might do better, — we recommend him a study of the best writers;’ then conclude by a Latin quotation, which you may take from one of the mottoes in the ‘Spectator.’

“Now, young gentleman, for a specimen of the metaphorical tickle: ‘We beg this poetical aspirant to remember the fate of Pyrenæus, who, attempting to pursue the Muses, forgot that he had not the wings of the goddesses, flung himself from the loftiest ascent he could reach, and perished.’

“This you see, Paul, is a loftier and more erudite sort of tickle, and may be reserved for one of the Quarterly Reviews. Never throw away a simile unnecessarily.

“Now for a sample of the facetious tickle: ‘Mr. — has obtained a considerable reputation! Some fine ladies think him a great philosopher, and he has been praised in our hearing by some Cambridge Fellows for his knowledge of fashionable society.’

“For this sort of tickle we generally use the dullest of our tribe; and I have selected the foregoing example from the criticisms of a distinguished writer in ‘The Asinæum,’ whom we call, *par excellence*, the Ass.

“There is a variety of other tickles, — the familiar, the vulgar, the polite, the good-natured, the bitter; but in gen-

eral all tickles may be supposed to signify, however disguised, one or other of these meanings: 'This book would be exceedingly good if it were not exceedingly bad;' or, 'this book would be exceedingly bad if it were not exceedingly good.'

"You have now, Paul, a general idea of the superior art required by the tickle?"

Our hero signified his assent by a sort of hysterical sound between a laugh and a groan. MacGrawler continued: —

"There is another grand difficulty attendant on this class of criticism, — it is generally requisite to read a few pages of the work; because we seldom tickle without extracting, and it requires some judgment to make the context agree with the extract. But it is not often necessary to extract when you slash or when you plaster; when you slash, it is better in general to conclude with: 'After what we have said, it is unnecessary to add that we cannot offend the taste of our readers by any quotation from this execrable trash.' And when you plaster, you may wind up with: 'We regret that our limits will not allow us to give any extracts from this wonderful and unrivalled work. We must refer our readers to the book itself.'

"And now, sir, I think I have given you a sufficient outline of the noble science of Scaliger and MacGrawler. Doubtless you are reconciled to the task I have allotted you; and while I tickle the Romance, you will slash the Inquiry and plaster the Epic!"

"I will do my best, sir!" said Paul, with that modest yet noble simplicity which becomes the virtuously ambitious; and MacGrawler forthwith gave him pen and paper, and set him down to his undertaking.

He had the good fortune to please MacGrawler, who, after having made a few corrections in style, declared he evinced a peculiar genius in that branch of composition. And then it was that Paul, made conceited by praise, said, looking contemptuously in the face of his preceptor, and swinging his legs to and fro, —

"And what, sir, shall I receive for the plastered Epic and the slashed Inquiry?"

As the face of the school-boy who, when guessing, as he

thinks rightly, at the meaning of some mysterious word in Cornelius Nepos, receiveth not the sugared epithet of praise, but a sudden stroke across the *os humerosve*,¹ even so, blank, puzzled, and thunderstricken, waxed the face of Mr. MacGrawler at the abrupt and astounding audacity of Paul.

"Receive!" he repeated, — "receive! Why, you impudent, ungrateful puppy, would you steal the bread from your old master? If I can obtain for your crude articles an admission into the illustrious pages of 'The Asinæum,' will you not be sufficiently paid, sir, by the honour? Answer me that. Another man, young gentleman, would have charged you a premium for his instructions; and here have I, in one lesson, imparted to you all the mysteries of the science, and for nothing! And you talk to me of 'receive! — receive!' Young gentleman, in the words of the immortal bard, 'I would as lief you had talked to me of ratsbane!'"

"In fine, then, Mr. MacGrawler, I shall get nothing for my trouble?" said Paul.

"To be sure not, sir; the very best writer in 'The Asinæum' only gets three shillings an article!" Almost more than he deserves, the critic might have added; for he who writes for nobody should receive nothing!

"Then, sir," quoth the mercenary Paul, profanely, and rising, he kicked with one kick the cat, the Epic, and the Inquiry to the other end of the room, — "then, sir, you may all go to the devil!"

We do not, O gentle reader! seek to excuse this hasty anathema. The habits of childhood will sometimes break forth despite of the after blessings of education; and we set not up Paul for thine imitation as that model of virtue and of wisdom which we design thee to discover in MacGrawler.

When that great critic perceived Paul had risen and was retreating in high dudgeon towards the door, he rose also, and repeating Paul's last words, said, —

"Go to the devil!" Not so quick, young gentleman, — *festina lente*, — all in good time. What though I did, astonished at your premature request, say that you should receive

¹ "Face or shoulders."

nothing; yet my great love for you may induce me to bestir myself on your behalf. 'The Asinæum,' it is true, only gives three shillings an article in general; but I am its editor, and will intercede with the proprietors on your behalf. Yes, yes; I will see what is to be done. Stop a bit, my boy."

Paul, though very irascible, was easily pacified; he reseated himself, and taking MacGrawler's hand, said, —

"Forgive me for my petulance, my dear sir; but, to tell you the honest truth, I am very low in the world just at present, and must get money in some way or another, — in short, I must either pick pockets or write (not gratuitously) for 'The Asinæum.'"

And without further preliminary Paul related his present circumstances to the critic, declared his determination not to return to the Mug, and requested, at least, from the friendship of his old preceptor the accommodation of shelter for that night.

MacGrawler was exceedingly disconcerted at hearing so bad an account of his pupil's finances as well as prospects, for he had secretly intended to regale himself that evening with a bowl of punch, for which he purposed that Paul should pay; but as he knew the quickness of parts possessed by the young gentleman, as also the great affection entertained for him by Mrs. Lobkins, who in all probability would solicit his return the next day, he thought it not unlikely that Paul would enjoy the same good fortune as that presiding over his feline companion, which, though it had just been kicked to the other end of the apartment, was now resuming its former occupation, unhurt, and no less merrily than before. He therefore thought it would be imprudent to discard his quondam pupil, despite of his present poverty; and, moreover, although the first happy project of pocketing all the profits derivable from Paul's industry was now abandoned, he still perceived great facility in pocketing a part of the same receipts. He therefore answered Paul very warmly, that he fully sympathized with him in his present melancholy situation; that, so far as he was concerned, he would share his last *shilling* with his beloved pupil, but that he regretted at that moment he had

only elevenpence halfpenny in his pocket; that he would, however, exert himself to the utmost in procuring an opening for Paul's literary genius; and that, if Paul liked to take the slashing and plastering part of the business on himself, he would willingly surrender it to him, and give him all the profits whatever they might be. *En attendant*, he regretted that a violent rheumatism prevented his giving up his own bed to his pupil, but that he might, with all the pleasure imaginable, sleep upon the rug before the fire. Paul was so affected by this kindness in the worthy man, that, though not much addicted to the melting mood, he shed tears of gratitude. He insisted, however, on not receiving the whole reward of his labours; and at length it was settled, though with a noble reluctance on the part of MacGrawler, that it should be equally shared between the critic and the critic's *protégé*, — the half profits being reasonably awarded to MacGrawler for his instructions and his recommendation.

CHAPTER VI.

BAD events peep out o' the tail of good purposes. — *Bartholomew Fair*.

It was not long before there was a visible improvement in the pages of "The Asinæum." The slashing part of that incomparable journal was suddenly conceived and carried on with a vigour and spirit which astonished the hallowed few who contributed to its circulation. It was not difficult to see that a new soldier had been enlisted in the service; there was something so fresh and hearty about the abuse that it could never have proceeded from the worn-out acerbity of an old *slasher*. To be sure, a little ignorance of ordinary facts, and an innovating method of applying words to meanings which they never were meant to denote, were now and then distinguishable in the criticisms of the new Achilles; nevertheless, it was easy to attribute these peculiarities to an original turn

of thinking; and the rise of the paper on the appearance of a series of articles upon contemporary authors, written by this "eminent hand," was so remarkable that fifty copies — a number perfectly unprecedented in the annals of "The Asinæum" — were absolutely sold in one week; indeed, remembering the principle on which it was founded, one sturdy old writer declared that the journal would soon do for itself and become popular. There was a remarkable peculiarity about the literary *débutant* who signed himself "Nobilitas:" he not only put old words to a new sense, but he used words which had never, among the general run of writers, been used before. This was especially remarkable in the application of hard names to authors. Once, in censuring a popular writer for pleasing the public and thereby growing rich, the "eminent hand" ended with "He who surreptitiously accumulates bustle¹ is, in fact, nothing better than a buzz gloak!"²

These enigmatical words and recondite phrases imparted a great air of learning to the style of the new critic; and from the unintelligible sublimity of his diction, it seemed doubtful whether he was a poet from Highgate or a philosopher from Königsberg. At all events, the reviewer preserved his incognito, and while his praises were rung at no less than three tea-tables, even glory appeared to him less delicious than disguise.

In this incognito, reader, thou hast already discovered Paul; and now we have to delight thee with a piece of unexampled morality in the excellent MacGrawler. That worthy Mentor, perceiving that there was an inherent turn for dissipation and extravagance in our hero, resolved magnanimously rather to bring upon himself the sins of treachery and malappropriation than suffer his friend and former pupil to incur those of wastefulness and profusion. Contrary therefore to the agreement made with Paul, instead of giving that youth the half of those profits consequent on his brilliant lucubrations, he imparted to him only one fourth, and, with the utmost tenderness for Paul's salvation, applied the other three portions of the same to his own necessities. The best actions

¹ Money.

² Pickpocket.

are, alas! often misconstrued in this world; and we are now about to record a remarkable instance of that melancholy truth.

One evening MacGrawler, having "moistened his virtue" in the same manner that the great Cato is said to have done, in the confusion which such a process sometimes occasions in the best regulated heads, gave Paul what appeared to him the outline of a certain article which he wished to be slashingly filled up, but what in reality was the following note from the editor of a monthly periodical:—

SIR, — Understanding that my friend, Mr. —, proprietor of "The Asinæum," allows the very distinguished writer whom you have introduced to the literary world, and who signs himself "Nobilitas," only five shillings an article, I beg, through you, to tender him double that sum. The article required will be of an ordinary length.

I am, sir, etc.,

Now, that very morning, MacGrawler had informed Paul of this offer, altering only, from the amiable motives we have already explained, the sum of ten shillings to that of four; and no sooner did Paul read the communication we have placed before the reader than, instead of gratitude to MacGrawler for his consideration of Paul's moral infirmities, he conceived against that gentleman the most bitter resentment. He did not, however, vent his feelings at once upon the Scotsman, — indeed, at that moment, as the sage was in a deep sleep under the table, it would have been to no purpose had he unbridled his indignation, — but he resolved without loss of time to quit the abode of the critic. "And, indeed," said he, soliloquizing, "I am heartily tired of this life, and shall be very glad to seek some other employment. Fortunately, I have hoarded up five guineas and four shillings; and with that independence in my possession, since I have forsworn gambling, I cannot easily starve."

To this soliloquy succeeded a misanthropical revery upon the faithlessness of friends; and the meditation ended in Paul's making up a little bundle of such clothes, etc., as

Dummie had succeeded in removing from the Mug, and which Paul had taken from the rag-merchant's abode one morning when Dummie was abroad.

When this easy task was concluded, Paul wrote a short and upbraiding note to his illustrious preceptor, and left it unsealed on the table. He then, upsetting the ink-bottle on MacGrawler's sleeping countenance, departed from the house, and strolled away he cared not whither.

The evening was gradually closing as Paul, chewing the cud of his bitter fancies, found himself on London Bridge. He paused there, and leaning over the bridge, gazed wistfully on the gloomy waters that rolled onward, caring not a minnow for the numerous charming young ladies who have thought proper to drown themselves in those merciless waves, thereby depriving many a good mistress of an excellent housemaid or an invaluable cook, and many a treacherous Phaon of letters beginning with "Parjured Villen," and ending with "Your affectionot but molancolly Molly."

While thus musing, he was suddenly accosted by a gentleman in boots and spurs, having a riding-whip in one hand, and the other hand stuck in the pocket of his inexpressibles. The hat of the gallant was gracefully and carefully put on, so as to derange as little as possible a profusion of dark curls, which, streaming with unguents, fell low not only on either side of the face, but on the neck and even the shoulders of the owner. The face was saturnine and strongly marked, but handsome and striking. There was a mixture of frippery and sternness in its expression, — something between Madame Vestris and T. P. Cooke, or between "lovely Sally" and a "Captain bold of Halifax." The stature of this personage was remarkably tall, and his figure was stout, muscular, and well knit. In fine, to complete his portrait, and give our readers of the present day an exact idea of this hero of the past, we shall add that he was altogether that sort of gentleman one sees swaggering in the Burlington Arcade, with his hair and hat on one side, and a military cloak thrown over his shoulders; or prowling in Regent Street, towards the evening, *whiskered* and *cigarred*.

Laying his hand on the shoulder of our hero, this gentleman said, with an affected intonation of voice, —

“How dost, my fine fellow? Long since I saw you! Damme, but you look the worse for wear. What hast thou been doing with thyself?”

“Ha!” cried our hero, returning the salutation of the stranger, “and is it Long Ned whom I behold? I am indeed glad to meet you; and I say, my friend, I hope what I heard of you is not true!”

“Hist!” said Long Ned, looking round fearfully, and sinking his voice; “never talk of what you hear of gentlemen, except you wish to bring them to their last dying speech and confession. But come with me, my lad; there is a tavern hard by, and we may as well discuss matters over a pint of wine. You look cursed seedy, to be sure; but I can tell Bill the waiter — famous fellow, that Bill! — that you are one of my tenants, come to complain of my steward, who has just distrained you for rent, you dog! No wonder you look so worn in the rigging. Come, follow me. I can’t walk *with* thee. It would look too like Northumberland House and the butcher’s abode next door taking a stroll together.”

“Really, Mr. Pepper,” said our hero, colouring, and by no means pleased with the ingenious comparison of his friend, “if you are ashamed of my clothes, which I own might be newer, I will not wound you with my —”

“Pooh! my lad, pooh!” cried Long Ned, interrupting him; “never take offence. *I* never do. I never take anything but money, except, indeed, watches. I don’t mean to hurt your feelings; all of us have been poor once. ’Gad, I remember when I had not a dud to my back; and now, you see me, — you see me, Paul! But come, ’t is only through the streets you need separate from me. Keep a little behind, very little; that will do. Ay, that will do,” repeated Long Ned, muttering to himself; “they ’ll take him for a bailiff. It looks handsome nowadays to be so attended; it shows one *had credit once!*”

Meanwhile Paul, though by no means pleased with the contempt expressed for his personal appearance by his lengthy

associate, and impressed with a keener sense than ever of the crimes of his coat and the vices of his other garment, — “Oh, breathe not its name!” — followed doggedly and sullenly the strutting steps of the coxcombical Mr. Pepper. That personage arrived at last at a small tavern, and arresting a waiter who was running across the passage into the coffee-room with a dish of hung-beef, demanded (no doubt from a pleasing anticipation of a similar pendulous catastrophe) a plate of the same excellent cheer, to be carried, in company with a bottle of port, into a private apartment. No sooner did he find himself alone with Paul than, bursting into a loud laugh, Mr. Ned surveyed his comrade from head to foot through an eyeglass which he wore fastened to his button-hole by a piece of blue ribbon.

“Well, ’gad now,” said he, stopping ever and anon, as if to laugh the more heartily, “stab my vitals, but you are a comical quiz. I wonder what the women would say, if they saw the dashing Edward Pepper, Esquire, walking arm in arm with thee at Ranelagh or Vauxhall! Nay, man, never be downcast; if I laugh at thee, it is only to make thee look a little merrier thyself. Why, thou lookest like a book of my grandfather’s called Burton’s ‘Anatomy of Melancholy;’ and faith, a shabbier bound copy of it I never saw.”

“These jests are a little hard,” said Paul, struggling between anger and an attempt to smile; and then recollecting his late literary occupations, and the many extracts he had taken from “Gleanings of the Belles Lettres,” in order to impart elegance to his criticisms, he threw out his hand theatrically, and spouted with a solemn face, —

“‘Of all the griefs that harass the distrest,
Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest!’”

“Well, now, prithee forgive me,” said Long Ned, composing his features, “and just tell me what you have been doing the last two months.”

“Slashing and plastering!” said Paul, with conscious pride.

“Slashing and what? The boy’s mad. What do you mean, Paul?”

"In other words," said our hero, speaking very slowly, "know, O very Long Ned! that I have been critic to 'The Asinæum.'"

If Paul's comrade laughed at first, he now laughed ten times more merrily than ever. He threw his full length of limb upon a neighbouring sofa, and literally rolled with eachinnatory convulsions; nor did his risible emotions subside until the entrance of the hung-beef restored him to recollection. Seeing, then, that a cloud lowered over Paul's countenance, he went up to him with something like gravity, begged his pardon for his want of politeness, and desired him to wash away all unkindness in a bumper of port. Paul, whose excellent dispositions we have before had occasion to remark, was not impervious to his friend's apologies. He assured Long Ned that he quite forgave him for his ridicule of the high situation he (Paul) had enjoyed in the literary world; that it was the duty of a public censor to bear no malice, and that he should be very glad to take his share in the interment of the hung-beef.

The pair now sat down to their repast; and Paul, who had fared but meagrely in that Temple of Athena over which MacGrawler presided, did ample justice to the viands before him. By degrees, as he ate and drank, his heart opened to his companion; and laying aside that Asinæum dignity which he had at first thought it incumbent on him to assume, he entertained Pepper with all the particulars of the life he had lately passed. He narrated to him his breach with Dame Lobkins, his agreement with MacGrawler, the glory he had acquired, and the wrongs he had sustained; and he concluded, as now the second bottle made its appearance, by stating his desire of exchanging for some more active profession that sedentary career which he had so promisingly begun.

This last part of Paul's confessions secretly delighted the soul of Long Ned; for that experienced collector of the highways — Ned was, indeed, of no less noble a profession — had long fixed an eye upon our hero, as one whom he thought likely to be an honour to that enterprising calling which he espoused, and an useful assistant to himself. He had not, in

his earlier acquaintance with Paul, when the youth was under the roof and the *surveillance* of the practised and wary Mrs. Lobkins, deemed it prudent to expose the exact nature of his own pursuits, and had contented himself by gradually ripening the mind and the finances of Paul into that state when the proposition of a leap from a hedge would not be likely greatly to revolt the person to whom it was made. He now thought that time near at hand; and filling our hero's glass up to the brim, thus artfully addressed him:—

“Courage, my friend! Your narration has given me a sensible pleasure; for curse me if it has not strengthened my favourite opinion, — that everything is for the best. If it had not been for the meanness of that pitiful fellow, Mac-Grawler, you might still be inspired with the paltry ambition of earning a few shillings a week and vilifying a parcel of poor devils in the what-d’ye-call it, with a hard name; whereas now, my good Paul, I trust I shall be able to open to your genius a new career, in which guineas are had for the asking, — in which you may wear fine clothes, and ogle the ladies at Ranelagh; and when you are tired of glory and liberty, Paul, why, you have only to make your bow to an heirless, or a widow with a spanking jointure, and quit the hum of men like a Cincinnatus!”

Though Paul’s perception into the abstruser branches of morals was not very acute, — and at that time the port wine had considerably confused the few notions he possessed upon “the beauty of virtue,” — yet he could not but perceive that Mr. Pepper’s insinuated proposition was far from being one which the bench of bishops or a synod of moralists would conscientiously have approved. He consequently remained silent; and Long Ned, after a pause, continued:—

“You know my genealogy, my good fellow? I was the son of Lawyer Pepper, a shrewd old dog, but as hot as Calcutta; and the grandson of Sexton Pepper, a great author, who wrote verses on tombstones, and kept a stall of religious tracts in Carlisle. My grandfather, the sexton, was the best temper of the family; for all of us are a little inclined to be hot in the mouth. Well, my fine fellow, my father left me his bless-

ing, and this devilish good head of hair. I lived for some years on my own resources. I found it a particularly inconvenient mode of life, and of late I have taken to live on the public. My father and grandfather did it before me, though in a different line. 'Tis the pleasantest plan in the world. Follow my example, and your coat shall be as spruce as my own. Master Paul, your health!"

"But, O longest of mortals!" said Paul, refilling his glass, "though the public may allow you to eat your mutton off their backs for a short time, they will kick up at last, and upset you and your banquet; in other words (pardon my metaphor, dear Ned, in remembrance of the part I have lately maintained in 'The Asinæum,' that most magnificent and metaphorical of journals!), — in other words, the police will nab thee at last; and thou wilt have the distinguished fate, as thou already hast the distinguishing characteristic, of Absalom!"

"You mean that I shall be hanged," said Long Ned, "that may or may not be; but he who fears death never enjoys life. Consider, Paul, that though hanging is a bad fate, starving is a worse; wherefore fill your glass, and let us drink to the health of that great donkey, the people, and may we never want saddles to ride it!"

"To the great donkey," cried Paul, tossing off his bumper; "may your (*y*)ears be as long! But I own to you, my friend, that I cannot enter into your plans. And, as a token of my resolution, I shall drink no more, for my eyes already begin to dance in the air; and if I listen longer to your resistless eloquence, my feet may share the same fate!"

So saying, Paul rose; nor could any entreaty, on the part of his entertainer, persuade him to resume his seat.

"Nay, as you will," said Pepper, affecting a *nonchalant* tone, and arranging his cravat before the glass, — "nay, as you will. Ned Pepper requires no man's companionship against his liking; and if the noble spark of ambition be not in your bosom, 'tis no use spending my breath in blowing at what only existed in my too flattering opinion of your qualities. So then, you propose to return to MacGrawler (the scurvy old

cheat!), and pass the inglorious remainder of your life in the mangling of authors and the murder of grammar? Go, my good fellow, go! scribble again and forever for MacGrawler, and let him live upon thy brains instead of suffering thy brains to —”

“Hold!” cried Paul. “Although I may have some scruples which prevent my adoption of that rising line of life you have proposed to me, yet you are very much mistaken if you imagine me so spiritless as any longer to subject myself to the frauds of that rascal MacGrawler. No! My present intention is to pay my old nurse a visit. It appears to me passing strange that though I have left her so many weeks, she has never relented enough to track me out, which one would think would have been no difficult matter; and now, you see, that I am pretty well off, having five guineas and four shillings all my own, and she can scarcely think I want her money, my heart melts to her, and I shall go and ask pardon for my haste!”

“Pshaw! sentimental,” cried Long Ned, a little alarmed at the thought of Paul’s gliding from those clutches which he thought had now so firmly closed upon him. “Why, you surely don’t mean, after having once tasted the joys of independence, to go back to the boozing-ken, and bear all Mother Lobkins’s drunken tantrums! Better have stayed with MacGrawler, of the two!”

“You mistake me,” answered Paul; “I mean solely to make it up with her, and get her permission to see the world. My ultimate intention is — to travel.”

“Right,” cried Ned, “on the high-road, — and on horseback, I hope.”

“No, my Colossus of Roads! no. I am in doubt whether or not I shall enlist in a marching regiment, or — Give me your advice on it! I fancy I have a great turn for the stage, ever since I saw Garrick in ‘Richard.’ Shall I turn stroller? It must be a merry life.”

“Oh, the devil!” cried Ned. “I myself once did Cassio in a barn, and every one swore I enacted the drunken scene to perfection; but you have no notion what a lamentable life it is

to a man of any susceptibility. No, my friend, no! There is only one line in all the old plays worthy thy attention, —

“ ‘ *Toby* or not *toby*,¹ that is the question. ’

I forget the rest! ”

“ Well, ” said our hero, answering in the same jocular vein, “ I confess I have ‘ the actor’s high ambition. ’ It is astonishing how my heart beat when Richard cried out, ‘ Come *bustle*,² *bustle* ! ’ Yes, Pepper, avaunt! —

“ ‘ A thousand hearts are great within my bosom. ’ ”

“ Well, well, ” said Long Ned, stretching himself, “ since you are so fond of the play, what say you to an excursion thither to-night? Garrick acts. ”

“ Done! ” cried Paul.

“ Done! ” echoed lazily Long Ned, rising with that *blasé* air which distinguishes the matured man of the world from the enthusiastic tyro, — “ done! and we will adjourn afterwards to the White Horse. ”

“ But stay a moment, ” said Paul; “ if you remember, I owed you a guinea when I last saw you, — here it is! ”

“ Nonsense, ” exclaimed Long Ned, refusing the money, — “ nonsense! You want the money at present; pay me when you are richer. Nay, never be coy about it; debts of honour are not paid now as they used to be. We lads of the Fish Lane Club have changed all that. Well, well, if I must! ”

And Long Ned, seeing that Paul insisted, pocketed the guinea. When this delicate matter had been arranged, —

“ Come, ” said Pepper, “ come, get your hat; but, bless me! I have forgotten one thing. ”

“ What? ”

“ Why, my fine Paul, consider. The play is a bang-up sort of a place; look at your coat and your waistcoat, that’s all! ”

Our hero was struck dumb with this *argumentum ad hominem*. But Long Ned, after enjoying his perplexity, relieved him of it by telling him that he knew of an honest tradesman

¹ The highway.

² Money.

who kept a ready-made shop just by the theatre, and who could fit him out in a moment.

In fact, Long Ned was as good as his word; he carried Paul to a tailor, who gave him for the sum of thirty shillings — half ready money, half on credit — a green coat with a tarnished gold lace, a pair of red inexpressibles, and a pepper-and-salt waistcoat. It is true, they were somewhat of the largest, for they had once belonged to no less a person than Long Ned himself; but Paul did not then regard those niceties of apparel, as he was subsequently taught to do by Gentleman George (a personage hereafter to be introduced to our reader), and he went to the theatre as well satisfied with himself as if he had been Mr. T—— or the Count de M——.

Our adventurers are now quietly seated in the theatre; and we shall not think it necessary to detail the performances they saw, or the observations they made. Long Ned was one of those superior beings of the road who would not for the world have condescended to appear anywhere but in the boxes; and, accordingly, the friends procured a couple of places in the dress-tier. In the next box to the one our adventurers adorned they remarked, more especially than the rest of the audience, a gentleman and a young lady seated next each other; the latter, who was about thirteen years old, was so uncommonly beautiful that Paul, despite his dramatic enthusiasm, could scarcely divert his eyes from her countenance to the stage. Her hair, of a bright and fair auburn, hung in profuse ringlets about her neck, shedding a softer shade upon a complexion in which the roses seemed just budding as it were into blush. Her eyes, large, blue, and rather languishing than brilliant, were curtained by the darkest lashes; her mouth seemed literally girt with smiles, so numberless were the dimples that every time the full, ripe, dewy lips were parted rose into sight; and the enchantment of the dimples was aided by two rows of teeth more dazzling than the richest pearls that ever glittered on a bride. But the chief charm of the face was its exceeding and touching air of innocence and girlish softness; you might have gazed forever upon that first unspeakable bloom, that all untouched and stainless down,

which seemed as if a very breath could mar it. Perhaps the face might have wanted animation; but perhaps, also, it borrowed from that want an attraction. The repose of the features was so soft and gentle that the eye wandered there with the same delight, and left it with the same reluctance, which it experiences in dwelling on or in quitting those hues which are found to harmonize the most with its vision. But while Paul was feeding his gaze on this young beauty, the keen glances of Long Ned had found an object no less fascinating in a large gold watch which the gentleman who accompanied the damsel ever and anon brought to his eye, as if he were waxing a little weary of the length of the pieces or the lingering progression of time.

"What a beautiful face!" whispered Paul.

"Is the face gold, then, as well as the back?" whispered Long Ned, in return.

Our hero started, frowned, and despite the gigantic stature of his comrade, told him, very angrily, to find some other subject for jesting. Ned in his turn stared, but made no reply.

Meanwhile Paul, though the lady was rather too young to fall in love with, began wondering what relationship her companion bore to her. Though the gentleman altogether was handsome, yet his features and the whole character of his face were widely different from those on which Paul gazed with such delight. He was not, seemingly, above five-and-forty, but his forehead was knit into many a line and furrow; and in his eyes the light, though searching, was more sober and staid than became his years. A disagreeable expression played about the mouth; and the shape of the face, which was long and thin, considerably detracted from the prepossessing effect of a handsome aquiline nose, fine teeth, and a dark, manly, though sallow complexion. There was a mingled air of shrewdness and distraction in the expression of his face. He seemed to pay very little attention to the play, or to anything about him; but he testified very considerable alacrity, when the play was over, in putting her cloak around his young companion, and in threading their way through the thick crowd that the boxes were now pouring forth.

Paul and his companion silently, and each with very different motives from the other, followed them. They were now at the door of the theatre.

A servant stepped forward and informed the gentleman that his carriage was a few paces distant, but that it might be some time before it could drive up to the theatre.

"Can you walk to the carriage, my dear?" said the gentleman to his young charge; and she answering in the affirmative, they both left the house, preceded by the servant.

"Come on!" said Long Ned, hastily, and walking in the same direction which the strangers had taken. Paul readily agreed. They soon overtook the strangers. Long Ned walked the nearest to the gentleman, and brushed by him in passing. Presently a voice cried, "Stop thief!" and Long Ned, saying to Paul, "Shift for yourself, run!" darted from our hero's side into the crowd, and vanished in a twinkling. Before Paul could recover his amaze, he found himself suddenly seized by the collar; he turned abruptly, and saw the dark face of the young lady's companion.

"Rascal!" cried the gentleman, "my watch!"

"Watch!" repeated Paul, bewildered, and only for the sake of the young lady refraining from knocking down his arrester, — "watch!"

"Ay, young man!" cried a fellow in a great-coat, who now suddenly appeared on the other side of Paul; "this gentleman's watch. Please your honour," addressing the complainant, "*I* be a watch too; shall I take up this chap?"

"By all means," cried the gentleman; "I would not have lost my watch for twice its value. I can swear I saw this fellow's companion snatch it from my fob. The thief's gone; but we have at least the accomplice. I give him in strict charge to you, watchman; take the consequences if you let him escape."

The watchman answered, sullenly, that he did not want to be threatened, and he knew how to discharge his duty.

"Don't answer me, fellow!" said the gentleman, haughtily; "do as I tell you!" And after a little colloquy, Paul found himself suddenly marched off between two tall fellows, who looked prodigiously inclined to eat him. By this time he had

recovered his surprise and dismay. He did not want the penetration to see that his companion had really committed the offence for which he was charged; and he also foresaw that the circumstance might be attended with disagreeable consequences to himself. Under all the features of the case, he thought that an attempt to escape would not be an imprudent proceeding on his part; accordingly, after moving a few paces very quietly and very passively, he watched his opportunity, wrenched himself from the gripe of the gentleman on his left, and brought the hand thus released against the cheek of the gentleman on his right with so hearty a good will as to cause him to relinquish his hold, and retreat several paces towards the areas in a slanting position. But that roundabout sort of blow with the left fist is very unfavourable towards the preservation of a firm balance; and before Paul had recovered sufficiently to make an effectual *bolt*, he was prostrated to the earth by a blow from the other and undamaged watchman, which utterly deprived him of his senses; and when he recovered those useful possessions (which a man may reasonably boast of losing, since it is only the minority who have them to lose), he found himself stretched on a bench in the watchhouse.

CHAPTER VII.

BEGIN with many a gallant slave,
 Apparell'd as becomes the brave,
 Old Giaffir sat in his divan :

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Much I misdoubt this wayward boy
 Will one day work me more annoy.

Bride of Abydos.

THE learned and ingenious John Schweighæuser (a name facile to spell and mellifluous to pronounce) hath been pleased, in that *Appendix continens particulam doctrinæ de mente humana*, which closeth the volume of his "Opuscula Academica," to observe (we translate from memory) that, "in the

infinite variety of things which in the theatre of the world occur to a man's survey, or in some manner or another affect his body or his mind, by far the greater part are so contrived as to bring to him rather some sense of pleasure than of pain or discomfort." Assuming that this holds generally good in well-constituted frames, we point out a notable example in the case of the incarcerated Paul; for although that youth was in no agreeable situation at the time present, and although nothing very encouraging smiled upon him from the prospects of the future, yet, as soon as he had recovered his consciousness, and given himself a rousing shake, he found an immediate source of pleasure in discovering, first, that several ladies and gentlemen bore him company in his imprisonment; and, secondly, in perceiving a huge jug of water within his reach, which, as his awaking sensation was that of burning thirst, he delightedly emptied at a draught. He then, stretching himself, looked around with a wistful earnestness, and discovered a back turned towards him, and recumbent on the floor, which at the very first glance appeared to him familiar. "Surely," thought he, "I know that frieze coat, and the peculiar turn of those narrow shoulders." Thus soliloquizing, he raised himself, and putting out his leg, he gently kicked the reclining form. "Muttering strange oaths," the form turned round, and raising itself upon that inhospitable part of the body in which the introduction of foreign feet is considered anything but an honour, it fixed its dull blue eyes upon the face of the disturber of its slumbers, gradually opening them wider and wider, until they seemed to have enlarged themselves into proportions fit for the swallowing of the important truth that burst upon them, and then from the mouth of the creature issued, —

"Queer my glims, if that be n't little Paul!"

"Ay, Dummie, here I am! Not been long without being laid by the heels, you see! Life is short; we must make the best use of our time!"

Upon this, Mr. Dunnaker (it was no less respectable a person) scrambled up from the floor, and seating himself on the bench beside Paul, said in a pitying tone, —

"Vy, laus-a-me! if you be n't knocked o' the head! Your poll's as bloody as Murphy's face¹ ven his throat's cut!"

"'Tis only the fortune of war, Dummie, and a mere trifle; the heads manufactured at Thames Court are not easily put out of order. But tell me, how come you here?"

"Vy, I had been lushing heavy vet —"

"Till you grew light in the head, eh, — and fell into the kennel?"

"Yes."

"Mine is a worse business than that, I fear;" and therewith Paul, in a lower voice, related to the trusty Dummie the train of accidents which had conducted him to his present asylum. Dummie's face elongated as he listened; however, when the narrative was over, he endeavoured such consolatory palliatives as occurred to him. He represented, first, the possibility that the gentleman might not take the trouble to appear; secondly, the certainty that no watch was found about Paul's person; thirdly, the fact that, even by the gentleman's confession, Paul had not been the actual offender; fourthly, if the worst came to the worst, what were a few weeks' or even months' imprisonment?

"Blow me tight!" said Dummie, "if it be n't as good a vay of passing the time as a cove as is fond of snuggery need desire!"

This observation had no comfort for Paul, who recoiled, with all the maiden coyness of one to whom such unions are unfamiliar, from a matrimonial alliance with the *snuggery* of the House of Correction. He rather trusted to another source for consolation. In a word, he encouraged the flattering belief that Long Ned, finding that Paul had been caught instead of himself, would have the generosity to come forward and exculpate him from the charge. On hinting this idea to Dummie, that accomplished "man about town" could not for some time believe that any simpleton could be so thoroughly unacquainted with the world as seriously to entertain so ridiculous a notion; and, indeed, it is somewhat remarkable that

¹ "Murphy's face," unlearned reader, appeareth, in Irish phrase, to mean "pig's head."

such a hope should ever have told its flattering tale to one brought up in the house of Mrs. Margaret Lobkins. But Paul, we have seen, had formed many of his notions from books; and he had the same fine theories of your "moral rogue" that possess the minds of young patriots when they first leave college for the House of Commons, and think integrity a prettier thing than office.

Mr. Dunnaker urged Paul, seriously, to dismiss so vague and childish a fancy from his breast, and rather to think of what line of defence it would be best for him to pursue. This subject being at length exhausted, Paul recurred to Mrs. Lobkins, and inquired whether Dummie had lately honoured that lady with a visit.

Mr. Dunnaker replied that he had, though with much difficulty, appeased her anger against him for his supposed abetment of Paul's excesses, and that of late she had held sundry conversations with Dummie respecting our hero himself. Upon questioning Dummie further, Paul learned the good matron's reasons for not evincing that solicitude for his return which our hero had reasonably anticipated. The fact was, that she, having no confidence whatsoever in his own resources independent of her, had not been sorry of an opportunity effectually, as she hoped, to humble that pride which had so revolted her; and she pleased her vanity by anticipating the time when Paul, starved into submission, would gladly and penitently re-seek the shelter of her roof, and, tamed as it were by experience, would never again kick against the yoke which her matronly prudence thought it fitting to impose upon him. She contented herself, then, with obtaining from Dummie the intelligence that our hero was under MacGrawler's roof, and therefore out of all positive danger to life and limb; and as she could not foresee the ingenious exertions of intellect by which Paul had converted himself into the "Nobilitas" of "The Asinæum," and thereby saved himself from utter penury, she was perfectly convinced, from her knowledge of character, that the illustrious MacGrawler would not long continue that protection to the rebellious *protégé* which in her opinion was his only preservative from picking pockets or

famishing. To the former decent alternative she knew Paul's great and jejune aversion; and she consequently had little fear for his morals or his safety, in thus abandoning him for a while to chance. Any anxiety, too, that she might otherwise have keenly experienced was deadened by the habitual intoxication now increasing upon the good lady with age, and which, though at times she could be excited to all her characteristic vehemence, kept her senses for the most part plunged into a Lethean stupor, or, to speak more courteously, into a poetical abstraction from the things of the external world.

"But," said Dummie, as by degrees he imparted the solution of the dame's conduct to the listening ear of his companion, — "but I hopes as how ven you be out of this 'ere scrape, leetle Paul, you vill take varning, and drop Meester Pepper's acquaintance (vich, I must say, I vas always a sorry to see you hencourage), and go home to the Mug, and fam grasp the old mort, for she has not been like the same cretur ever since you vent. She's a delicate-'arted 'oman, that Piggy Lob!"

So appropriate a panegyric on Mrs. Margaret Lobkins might at another time have excited Paul's risible muscles; but at that moment he really felt compunction for the unceremonious manner in which he had left her, and the softness of regretful affection imbued in its hallowing colours even the image of Piggy Lob.

In conversation of this intellectual and domestic description, the night and ensuing morning passed away, till Paul found himself in the awful presence of Justice Burnflat. Several cases were disposed of before his own; and among others Mr. Dummie Dunnaker obtained his release, though not without a severe reprimand for his sin of inebriety, which no doubt sensibly affected the ingenuous spirit of that noble character. At length Paul's turn came. He heard, as he took his station, a general buzz. At first he imagined it was at his own interesting appearance; but raising his eyes, he perceived that it was at the entrance of the gentleman who was to become his accuser.

"Hush," said some one near him, "'tis Lawyer Brandon.

Ah, he's a 'cute fellow! it will go hard with the person he complains of."

There was a happy fund of elasticity of spirit about our hero; and though he had not the good fortune to have "a blighted heart,"—a circumstance which, by the poets and philosophers of the present day, is supposed to inspire a man with wonderful courage, and make him impervious to all misfortunes, — yet he bore himself up with wonderful courage under his present trying situation, and was far from overwhelmed, though he was certainly a little damped, by the observation he had just heard.

Mr. Brandon was, indeed, a barrister of considerable reputation, and in high esteem in the world, not only for talent, but also for a great austerity of manners, which, though a little mingled with sternness and acerbity for the errors of other men, was naturally thought the more praiseworthy on that account; there being, as persons of experience are doubtless aware, two divisions in the first class of morality, — *imprimis*, a great hatred for the vices of one's neighbour; secondly, the possession of virtues in one's self.

Mr. Brandon was received with great courtesy by Justice Burnflat; and as he came, watch in hand (a borrowed watch), saying that his time was worth five guineas a moment, the justice proceeded immediately to business.

Nothing could be clearer, shorter, or more satisfactory than the evidence of Mr. Brandon. The corroborative testimony of the watchman followed; and then Paul was called upon for his defence. This was equally brief with the charge; but, alas! it was not equally satisfactory. It consisted in a firm declaration of his innocence. His comrade, he confessed, might have stolen the watch; but he humbly suggested that that was exactly the very reason why *he* had *not* stolen it.

"How long, fellow," asked Justice Burnflat, "have you known your companion?"

"About half a year."

"And what is his name and calling?"

Paul hesitated, and declined to answer.

"A sad piece of business!" said the justice, in a melancholy tone, and shaking his head portentously.

The lawyer acquiesced in the aphorism, but with great magnanimity observed that he did not wish to be hard upon the young man. His youth was in his favour, and his offence was probably the consequence of evil company. He suggested, therefore, that as he must be perfectly aware of the address of his friend, he should receive a full pardon if he would immediately favour the magistrate with that information. He concluded by remarking, with singular philanthropy, that it was not the punishment of the youth, but the recovery of his watch, that he desired.

Justice Burnflat, having duly impressed upon our hero's mind the disinterested and Christian mercy of the complainant, and the everlasting obligation Paul was under to him for its display, now repeated, with double solemnity, those queries respecting the habitation and name of Long Ned which our hero had before declined to answer.

Grieved are we to confess that Paul, ungrateful for and wholly untouched by the beautiful benignity of Lawyer Brandon, continued firm in his stubborn denial to betray his comrade; and with equal obduracy he continued to insist upon his own innocence and unblemished respectability of character.

"Your name, young man?" quoth the justice. "Your name, you say, is Paul, — Paul what? You have many an *alias*, I'll be bound."

Here the young gentleman again hesitated; at length he replied, —

"Paul Lobkins, your worship."

"Lobkins!" repeated the judge, — "Lobkins! Come hither, Saunders; have not we that name down in our black books?"

"So, please your worship," quoth a little stout man, very useful in many respects to the Festus of the police, "there is one Peggy Lobkins, who keeps a public-house, a sort of flash ken, called the Mug, in Thames Court, — not exactly in our beat, your worship."

"Ho, ho!" said Justice Burnflat, winking at Mr. Brandon,

"we must sift this a little. Pray, Mr. Paul Lobkins, what relation is the good landlady of the Mug, in Thames Court, to yourself?"

"None at all, sir," said Paul, hastily; "she's only a friend!"

Upon this there was a laugh in the court.

"Silence!" cried the justice. "And I dare say, Mr. Paul Lobkins, that this friend of yours will vouch for the respectability of your character, upon which you are pleased to value yourself?"

"I have not a doubt of it, sir," answered Paul; and there was another laugh.

"And is there any other equally weighty and praiseworthy friend of yours who will do you the like kindness?"

Paul hesitated; and at that moment, to the surprise of the court, but above all to the utter and astounding surprise of himself, two gentlemen, dressed in the height of the fashion, pushed forward, and bowing to the justice, declared themselves ready to vouch for the thorough respectability and unimpeachable character of Mr. Paul Lobkins, whom they had known, they said, for many years, and for whom they had the greatest respect. While Paul was surveying the persons of these kind friends, whom he never remembered to have seen before in the course of his life, the lawyer, who was a very sharp fellow, whispered to the magistrate; and that dignitary nodding as in assent, and eying the new-comers, inquired the names of Mr. Lobkins's witnesses.

"Mr. Eustace Fitzherbert" and "Mr. William Howard Russell," were the several replies.

Names so aristocratic produced a general sensation. But the impenetrable justice, calling the same Mr. Saunders he had addressed before, asked him to examine well the countenances of Mr. Lobkins's friends.

As the alguazil eyed the features of the memorable Don Raphael and the illustrious Manuel Morales, when the former of those accomplished personages thought it convenient to assume the travelling dignity of an Italian prince, son of the sovereign of the valleys which lie between Switzerland, the

Milanese, and Savoy, while the latter was contented with being servant to *Monseigneur le Prince*; even so, with far more earnestness than respect, did Mr. Saunders eye the features of those high-born gentlemen, Messrs. Eustace Fitzherbert and William Howard Russell; but after a long survey he withdrew his eyes, made an unsatisfactory and unrecognizing gesture to the magistrate, and said, —

“Please your worship, they are none of my flock; but Bill Troutling knows more of this sort of genteel chaps than I does.”

“Bid Bill Troutling appear!” was the laconic order.

At that name a certain modest confusion might have been visible in the faces of Mr. Eustace Fitzherbert and Mr. William Howard Russell, had not the attention of the court been immediately directed to another case. A poor woman had been committed for seven days to the House of Correction on a charge of *disrespectability*. Her husband, the person most interested in the matter, now came forward to disprove the charge; and by help of his neighbours he succeeded.

“It is all very true,” said Justice Burnflat; “but as your wife, my good fellow, will be out in five days, it will be scarcely worth while to release her now.”¹

So judicious a decision could not fail of satisfying the husband; and the audience became from that moment enlightened as to a very remarkable truth, — namely, that five days out of seven bear a peculiarly small proportion to the remaining two; and that people in England have so prodigious a love for punishment that though it is not worth while to release an innocent woman from prison five days sooner than one would otherwise have done, it is exceedingly well worth while to commit her to prison for seven!

When the husband, passing his rough hand across his eyes, and muttering some vulgar impertinence or another, had withdrawn, Mr. Saunders said, —

“Here be Bill Troutling, your worship!”

“Oh, well,” quoth the justice; “and now, Mr. Eustace

¹ A fact, occurring in the month of January, 1830. *Vide* “The Morning Herald.”

Fitz— Hallo, how 's this! Where are Mr. William Howard Russell and his friend Mr. Eustace Fitzherbert?"

"Echo answered, — where?"

Those noble gentlemen, having a natural dislike to be confronted with so low a person as Mr. Bill Troutling, had, the instant public interest was directed from them, silently disappeared from a scene where their rank in life seemed so little regarded. If, reader, you should be anxious to learn from what part of the world the transitory visitants appeared, know that they were spirits sent by that inimitable magician, Long Ned, partly to report how matters fared in the court; for Mr. Pepper, in pursuance of that old policy which teaches that the nearer the fox is to the hunters, the more chance he has of being overlooked, had, immediately on his abrupt departure from Paul, dived into a house in the very street where his ingenuity had displayed itself, and in which oysters and ale nightly allured and regaled an assembly that, to speak impartially, was more numerous than select. There had he learned how a pickpocket had been seized for unlawful affection to another man's watch; and there, while he quietly seasoned his oysters, had he, with his characteristic acuteness, satisfied his mind by the conviction that that arrested unfortunate was no other than Paul. Partly, therefore, as a precaution for his own safety, that he might receive early intelligence should Paul's defence make a change of residence expedient, and partly (out of the friendliness of fellowship) to back his companion with such aid as the favourable testimony of two well-dressed persons, little known "about town," might confer, he had despatched those celestial beings who had appeared under the mortal names of Eustace Fitzherbert and William Howard Russell to the imperial court of Justice Burnflat. Having thus accounted for the apparition (the *disapparition* requires no commentary) of Paul's "friends," we return to Paul himself.

Despite the perils with which he was girt, our young hero fought out to the last; but the justice was not by any means willing to displease Mr. Brandon, and observing that an in-

credulous and biting sneer remained stationary on that gentleman's lip during the whole of Paul's defence, he could not but shape his decision according to the well-known acuteness of the celebrated lawyer. Paul was sentenced to retire for three months to that country-house situated at Bridewell, to which the ungrateful functionaries of justice often banish their most active citizens.

As soon as the sentence was passed, Brandon, whose keen eyes saw no hope of recovering his lost treasure, declared that the rascal had perfectly the Old Bailey cut of countenance, and that he did not doubt but, if ever he lived to be a judge, he should also live to pass a very different description of sentence on the offender.

So saying, he resolved to lose no more time, and very abruptly left the office, without any other comfort than the remembrance that, at all events, he had sent the boy to a place where, let him be ever so innocent at present, he was certain to come out as much inclined to be guilty as his friends could desire; joined to such moral reflection as the tragedy of *Bombastes Furioso* might have afforded to himself in that sententious and terse line, —

“Thy watch is gone,— watches are made *to go*.”

Meanwhile Paul was conducted in state to his retreat, in company with two other offenders, — one a middle-aged man, though a very old “file,” who was sentenced for getting money under false pretences, and the other a little boy who had been found guilty of sleeping under a colonnade; it being the especial beauty of the English law to make no fine-drawn and nonsensical shades of difference between vice and misfortune, and its peculiar method of protecting the honest being to make as many rogues as possible in as short a space of time.

CHAPTER VIII.

Common Sense. What is the end of punishment as regards the individual punished?

Custom. To make him better!

Common Sense. How do you punish young offenders who are (from their youth) peculiarly alive to example, and whom it is therefore more easy either to ruin or reform than the matured?

Custom. We send them to the House of Correction, to associate with the d—dest rascals in the country!

Dialogue between Common Sense and Custom.—Very scarce.

As it was rather late in the day when Paul made his first *entrée* at Bridewell, he passed that night in the “receiving-room.” The next morning, as soon as he had been examined by the surgeon and clothed in the customary uniform, he was ushered, according to his classification, among the good company who had been considered guilty of that compendious offence, “a misdemeanour.” Here a tall gentleman marched up to him, and addressed him in a certain language, which might be called the freemasonry of flash, and which Paul, though he did not comprehend *verbatim*, rightly understood to be an inquiry whether he was a thorough rogue and an entire rascal. He answered half in confusion, half in anger; and his reply was so detrimental to any favourable influence he might otherwise have exercised over the interrogator, that the latter personage, giving him a pinch in the ear, shouted out, “Ramp, ramp!” and at that significant and awful word, Paul found himself surrounded in a trice by a whole host of ingenious tormentors. One pulled this member, another pinched that; one cuffed him before, and another thrashed him behind. By way of interlude to this pleasing occupation, they stripped him of the very few things that in his change of dress he had retained. One carried off his handkerchief, a second his neck-cloth, and a third, luckier than either, possessed himself of a pair of carnelian shirt-buttons, given to Paul as a *gage d’amour*

by a young lady who sold oranges near the Tower. Happily, before this initiatory process—technically termed “ramping,” and exercised upon all new-comers who seem to have a spark of decency in them—had reduced the bones of Paul, who fought tooth and nail in his defence, to the state of magnesia, a man of a grave aspect, who had hitherto plucked his oakum in quiet, suddenly rose, thrust himself between the victim and the assailants, and desired the latter, like one having authority, to leave the lad alone, and go and be d—d.

This proposal to resort to another place for amusement, though uttered in a very grave and tranquil manner, produced that instantaneous effect which admonitions from great rogues generally work upon little. Messieurs the *rampers* ceased from their amusements; and the ringleader of the gang, thumping Paul heartily on the back, declared he was a capital fellow, and it was only a bit of a *spree* like, which he hoped had not given any offence.

Paul, still clenching his fist, was about to answer in no pacific mood, when a turnkey, who did not care in the least how many men he locked up for an offence, but who did not at all like the trouble of looking after any one of his flock to see that the offence was not committed, now suddenly appeared among the set; and after scolding them for the excessive plague they were to him, carried off two of the poorest of the mob to solitary confinement. It happened, of course, that *these* two had not taken the smallest share in the disturbance. This scene over, the company returned to picking oakum; the tread-mill, that admirably just invention by which a strong man suffers no fatigue and a weak one loses his health for life, not having been then introduced into our excellent establishments for correcting crime. Bitterly and with many dark and wrathful feelings, in which the sense of injustice at punishment alone bore him up against the humiliations to which he was subjected,—bitterly and with a swelling heart, in which the thoughts that lead to crime were already forcing their way through a soil suddenly warmed for their growth, did Paul bend over his employment. He felt himself touched

on the arm; he turned, and saw that the gentleman who had so kindly delivered him from his tormentors was now sitting next to him. Paul gazed long and earnestly upon his neighbour, struggling with the thought that he had beheld that sagacious countenance in happier times, although now, alas! it was altered not only by time and vicissitudes but by that air of gravity which the cares of manhood spread gradually over the face of the most thoughtless, — until all doubt melted away, and he exclaimed, —

“Is that you, Mr. Tomlinson? How glad I am to see you here!”

“And I,” returned the quondam murderer for the newspapers, with a nasal twang, “should be very glad to see myself anywhere else.”

Paul made no answer; and Augustus continued, —

“‘To a wise man all places are the same,’ — so it has been said. I don’t believe it, Paul, — I don’t believe it. But a truce to reflection! I remembered you the moment I saw you, though you are surprisingly grown. How is my friend Mac-Grawler? — still hard at work for ‘The Asinæum’?”

“I believe so,” said Paul, sullenly, and hastening to change the conversation; “but tell me, Mr. Tomlinson, how came you hither? I heard you had gone down to the North of England to fulfil a lucrative employment.”

“Possibly! The world always misrepresents the actions of those who are constantly before it.”

“It is very true,” said Paul; “and I have said the same thing myself a hundred times in ‘The Asinæum,’ for we were never too lavish of our truths in that magnificent journal. ’Tis astonishing what a way we made three ideas go.”

“You remind me of myself and my newspaper labours,” rejoined Augustus Tomlinson. “I am not quite sure that I had so many as three ideas to spare; for, as you say, it is astonishing how far that number may go, properly managed. It is with writers as with strolling players, — the same three ideas that did for Turks in one scene do for Highlanders in the next; but you must tell me your history one of these days, and you shall hear mine.”

"I should be excessively obliged to you for your confidence," said Paul, "and I doubt not but your life must be excessively entertaining. Mine, as yet, has been but insipid. The lives of literary men are not fraught with adventure; and I question whether every writer in 'The Asinæum' has not led pretty nearly the same existence as that which I have sustained myself."

In conversation of this sort our newly restored friends passed the remainder of the day, until the hour of half-past four, when the prisoners are to suppose night has begun, and be locked up in their bedrooms. Tomlinson then, who was glad to re-find a person who had known him in his *beaux jours*, spoke privately to the turnkey; and the result of the conversation was the coupling Paul and Augustus in the same chamber, which was a sort of stone box, that generally accommodated three, and was—for we have measured it, as we would have measured the cell of the prisoner of Chillon—just eight feet by six.

We do not intend, reader, to indicate, by broad colours and in long detail, the moral deterioration of our hero; because we have found, by experience, that such pains on our part do little more than make thee blame our stupidity instead of lauding our intention. We shall therefore only work out our moral by subtle hints and brief comments; and we shall now content ourselves with reminding thee that hitherto thou hast seen Paul honest in the teeth of circumstances. Despite the contagion of the Mug, despite his associates in Fish Lane, despite his intimacy with Long Ned, thou hast seen him brave temptation, and look forward to some other career than that of robbery or fraud. Nay, even in his destitution, when driven from the abode of his childhood, thou hast observed how, instead of resorting to some more pleasurable or libertine road of life, he betook himself at once to the dull roof and insipid employments of MacGrawler, and preferred honestly earning his subsistence by the sweat of his brain to recurring to any of the numerous ways of living on others with which his experience among the worst part of society must have teemed, and which, to say the least of them, are more alluring

to the young and the adventurous than the barren paths of literary labour. Indeed, to let thee into a secret, it had been Paul's daring ambition to raise himself into a worthy member of the community. His present circumstances, it may hereafter be seen, made the cause of a great change in his desires; and the conversation he held that night with the ingenious and skilful Augustus went more towards fitting him for the hero of this work than all the habits of his childhood or the scenes of his earlier youth. Young people are apt, erroneously, to believe that it is a bad thing to be exceedingly wicked. The House of Correction is so called, because it is a place where so ridiculous a notion is invariably corrected.

The next day Paul was surprised by a visit from Mrs. Lobkins, who had heard of his situation and its causes from the friendly Dummie, and who had managed to obtain from Justice Burnflat an order of admission. They met, Pyramus and Thisbe like, with a wall, or rather an iron gate, between them; and Mrs. Lobkins, after an ejaculation of despair at the obstacle, burst weepingly into the pathetic reproach, —

“O Paul, thou hast brought thy pigs to a fine market!”

“’T is a market proper for pigs, dear dame,” said Paul, who, though with a tear in his eye, did not refuse a joke as bitter as it was inelegant; “for, of all others, it is the spot where a man learns to take care of his bacon.”

“Hold your tongue!” cried the dame, angrily. “What business has you to gabble on so while you are in limbo?”

“Ah, dear dame,” said Paul, “we can’t help these rubs and stumbles on our road to preferment!”

“Road to the scragging-post!” cried the dame. “I tells you, child, you’ll live to be hanged in spite of all my care and ’tention to you, though I hedicated you as a scholar, and always hoped as how you would grow up to be an honour to your —”

“King and country,” interrupted Paul. “We always say, honour to king and country, which means getting rich and paying taxes. ‘The more taxes a man pays, the greater honour he is to both,’ as Augustus says. Well, dear dame, all in good time.”

"What! you is merry, is you? Why does not you weep? Your heart is as hard as a brickbat. It looks quite unnatural and hyena-like to be so *devil-me-careish!*" So saying, the good dame's tears gushed forth with the bitterness of a despairing Parisina.

"Nay, nay," said Paul, who, though he suffered far more intensely, bore the suffering far more easily than his patroness, "we cannot mend the matter by crying. Suppose you see what can be done for me. I dare say you may manage to soften the justice's sentence by a little 'oil of palms;' and if you can get me out before I am quite corrupted, — a day or two longer in this infernal place will do the business, — I promise you that I will not only live honestly myself, but with people who live in the same manner."

"Buss me, Paul," said the tender Mrs. Lobkins, "buss me — Oh! but I forgits the gate. I'll see what can be done. And here, my lad, here's summat for you in the mean while, — a drop o' the cretur, to preach comfort to your poor stomach. Hush! smuggle it through, or they'll see you."

Here the dame endeavoured to push a stone bottle through the bars of the gate; but, alas! though the neck passed through, the body refused, and the dame was forced to retract the "cretur." Upon this, the kind-hearted woman renewed her sobbings; and so absorbed was she in her grief that seemingly quite forgetting for what purpose she had brought the bottle, she applied it to her own mouth, and consoled herself with that *elixir vitæ* which she had originally designed for Paul.

This somewhat restored her; and after a most affecting scene the dame reeled off with the vacillating steps natural to woe, promising, as she went, that if love or money could shorten Paul's confinement, neither should be wanting. We are rather at a loss to conjecture the exact influence which the former of these arguments, urged by the lovely Margaret, might have had upon Justice Burnflat.

When the good damè had departed, Paul hastened to repick his oakum and rejoin his friend. He found the worthy Augustus privately selling little elegant luxuries, such as

tobacco, gin, and rations of daintier viands than the prison allowed; for Augustus, having more money than the rest of his companions, managed, through the friendship of the turnkey, to purchase secretly, and to resell at about four hundred per cent, such comforts as the prisoners especially coveted.¹

"A proof," said Augustus, dryly, to Paul, "that by prudence and exertion even in those places where a man cannot turn himself he may manage to turn a penny."

CHAPTER IX.

"RELATE at large, my godlike guest," she said,
 "The Grecian stratagems, — the town betrayed!"

DRYDEN: *Virgil, Æneid*, book ii.

Descending thence, they 'scaped! — *Ibid.*

A GREAT improvement had taken place in the character of Augustus Tomlinson since Paul had last encountered that illustrious man. *Then* Augustus had affected the man of pleasure, the learned loungeur about town, the all-accomplished Pericles of the papers, gayly quoting Horace, gravely flanking a fly from the leader of Lord Dunshunner. *Now* a more serious yet not a less supercilious air had settled upon his features; the pretence of fashion had given way to the pretence of wisdom; and from the man of pleasure Augustus Tomlinson had grown to the philosopher. With this elevation alone, too, he was not content: he united the philosopher with the politician; and the ingenious rascal was pleased especially to pique himself upon being "a moderate Whig"! "Paul," he was wont to observe, "believe me, moderate Whiggism is a most excellent creed. It adapts itself to

¹ A very common practice at the Bridewell. The Governor at the Cold-bath-Fields, apparently a very intelligent and active man, every way fitted for a most arduous undertaking, informed us, in the only conversation we have had the honour to hold with him, that he thought he had nearly or quite destroyed in his jurisdiction this illegal method of commerce.

every possible change, to every conceivable variety of circumstance. It is the only politics for us who are the aristocrats of that free body who rebel against tyrannical laws; for, hang it, I am none of your democrats. Let there be dungeons and turnkeys for the low rascals who whip clothes from the hedge where they hang to dry, or steal down an area in quest of a silver spoon; but houses of correction are not made for men who have received an enlightened education, — who abhor your petty thefts as much as a justice of peace can do, — who ought never to be termed dishonest in their dealings, but, if they are found out, '*unlucky in their speculations*'!¹ A pretty thing, indeed, that there should be distinctions of rank among other members of the community, and none among us! Where's your boasted British Constitution, I should like to know, where are your privileges of aristocracy, if I, who am a gentleman born, know Latin, and have lived in the best society, should be thrust into this abominable place with a dirty fellow who was born in a cellar, and could never earn more at a time than would purchase a sausage? No, no! none of your levelling principles for me! I am liberal, Paul, and love liberty; but, thank Heaven, I despise your democracies!"

Thus, half in earnest, half veiling a natural turn to sarcasm, would this moderate Whig run on for the hour together during those long nights, commencing at half-past four, in which he and Paul bore each other company.

One evening, when Tomlinson was so bitterly disposed to be prolix that Paul felt himself somewhat wearied by his eloquence, our hero, desirous of a change in the conversation, reminded Augustus of his promise to communicate his history; and the philosophical Whig, nothing loath to speak of himself, cleared his throat, and began.

HISTORY OF AUGUSTUS TOMLINSON.

"Never mind who was my father, nor what was my native place! My first ancestor was Tommy Linn (his heir became

¹ A phrase applied to a noted defaulter of the public money.

Tom Linn's son), — you have heard the ballad made in his praise, —

“Tommy Linn is a Scotchman born,
His head is bald and his beard is shorn;
He had a cap made of a hare skin, —
An elder man is Tommy Linn!’¹

“There was a sort of prophecy respecting my ancestor's descendants darkly insinuated in the concluding stanza of this ballad: —

“Tommy Linn, and his wife, and his wife's mother,
They all fell into the fire together;
They that lay undermost got a hot skin, —
“We are not enough!” said Tommy Linn.’”¹

“You see the prophecy: it is applicable both to gentlemen rogues and to moderate Whigs; for both are *undermost* in the world, and both are perpetually bawling out, ‘*We are not enough!*’

“I shall begin my own history by saying, I went to a North Country school, where I was noted for my aptness in learning, and my skill at ‘prisoner's base,’ — upon my word I purposed no pun! I was intended for the Church. Wishing, betimes, to instruct myself in its ceremonies, I persuaded my school-master's maidservant to assist me towards promoting a christening. My father did not like this premature love for the sacred rites. He took me home; and wishing to give my clerical ardour a different turn, prepared me for *writing* sermons by *reading* me a dozen a day. I grew tired of this, strange as it may seem to you. ‘Father,’ said I, one morning, ‘it is no use talking; I will not go into the Church, — that's positive. Give me your blessing and a hundred pounds, and I'll go up to London and get a *living* instead of a curacy.’ My father stormed; but I got the better at last. I talked of becoming a private tutor; swore I had heard nothing was so easy, — the only things wanted were pupils; and the only way to get them was to go to London and let my learning be known. My poor father, — well, he's gone,

¹ See Ritson's “North-Country Chorister.”

and I am glad of it now!" The speaker's voice faltered. "I got the better, I say, and I came to town, where I had a relation a bookseller. Through his interest, I wrote a book of Travels in Ethiopia for an earl's son, who wanted to become a lion; and a Treatise on the Greek Particle, dedicated to the prime minister, for a dean, who wanted to become a bishop, — Greek being, next to interest, the best road to the mitre. These two achievements were liberally paid; so I took a lodging in a first floor, and resolved to make a bold stroke for a wife. What do you think I did? — nay, never guess; it would be hopeless. First, I went to the best tailor, and had my clothes sewn on my back; secondly, I got the peerage and its genealogies by heart; thirdly, I marched one night, with the coolest deliberation possible, into the house of a duchess, who was giving an immense rout! The newspapers had inspired me with this idea. I had read of the vast crowds which a lady 'at home' sought to win to her house. I had read of staircases impassable, and ladies carried out in a fit; and common-sense told me how impossible it was that the fair receiver should be acquainted with the legality of every importation. I therefore resolved to try my chance, and — entered the body of Augustus Tomlinson, as a piece of stolen goods. Faith! the first night I was shy, — I stuck to the staircase, and ogled an old maid of quality, whom I had heard announced as Lady Margaret Sinclair. Doubtless she had never been ogled before; and she was evidently enraptured with my glances. The next night I read of a ball at the Countess of —'s. My heart beat as if I were going to be whipped; but I plucked up courage, and repaired to her ladyship's. There I again beheld the divine Lady Margaret; and observing that she turned yellow, by way of a blush, when she saw me, I profited by the port I had drunk as an encouragement to my *entrée*, and lounging up in the most modish way possible, I reminded her ladyship of an introduction with which I *said* I had once been honoured at the Duke of Dashwell's, and requested her hand for the next cotillion. Oh, Paul, fancy my triumph! The old damsel said, with a sigh, she remembered me very well, —

ha, ha, ha! — and I carried her off to the cotillion like another Theseus bearing away a second Ariadne. Not to be prolix on this part of my life, I went night after night to balls and routs, for admission to which half the fine gentlemen in London would have given their ears. And I improved my time so well with Lady Margaret, who was her own mistress and had £5,000,—a devilish bad portion for some, but not to be laughed at by me,—that I began to think *when* the happy day should be fixed. Meanwhile, as Lady Margaret introduced me to some of her friends, and my lodgings were in a good situation, I had been honoured with some real invitations. The only two questions I ever was asked were (carelessly), ‘Was I the only son?’ and on my veritable answer ‘Yes!’ ‘What’ (this was more warmly put), — ‘what was my county?’ Luckily my county was a wide one, — Yorkshire; and any of its inhabitants whom the fair interrogators might have questioned about me could only have answered, I was not in their part of it.

“Well, Paul, I grew so bold by success that the devil one day put it into my head to go to a great dinner-party at the Duke of Dashwell’s. I went, dined, — nothing happened; I came away, and the next morning I read in the papers, —

“‘Mysterious affair — person lately going about — first houses — most fashionable parties — nobody knows — Duke of Dashwell’s yesterday. Duke not like to make disturbance — as — royalty present.’¹

“The journal dropped from my hands. At that moment the girl of the house gave me a note from Lady Margaret, — alluded to the paragraph; wondered who was ‘The Stranger;’ hoped to see me that night at Lord A——’s, to whose party I said I had been asked; speak then more fully on those matters I had touched on! — in short, dear Paul, a tender epistle! All great men are fatalists, — I am one now; fate made me a madman. In the very face of this ominous paragraph I mustered up courage, and went that night to Lord A——’s. The fact is, my affairs were in confusion, — I was greatly in debt. I knew it was necessary to finish my con-

¹ Fact.

quest over Lady Margaret as soon as possible; and Lord A——'s seemed the best place for the purpose. Nay, I thought delay so dangerous, after the cursed paragraph, that a day might unmask me, and it would be better therefore not to lose an hour in finishing the play of 'The Stranger' with the farce of 'The Honey Moon.' Behold me then at Lord A——'s, leading off Lady Margaret to the dance. Behold me whispering the sweetest of things in her ear. Imagine her approving my suit, and gently chiding me for talking of Gretna Green. Conceive all this, my dear fellow, and just at the height of my triumph, dilate the eyes of your imagination, and behold the stately form of Lord A——, my noble host, marching up to me, while a voice that, though low and quiet as an evening breeze, made my heart sink into my shoes, said, 'I believe, sir, you have received no invitation from Lady A——?'

"Not a word could I utter, Paul, —not a word. Had it been the highroad instead of a ballroom, I could have talked loudly enough; but I was under a spell. 'Ehem!' I faltered at last, —'e-h-e-m! Some mis-take, I—I—' There I stopped.

"'Sir,' said the earl, regarding me with a grave sternness, 'you had better withdraw.'

"'Bless me! what's all this?' cried Lady Margaret, dropping my palsied arm, and gazing on me as if she expected me to talk like a hero.

"'Oh,' said I, 'eh-e-m, eh-e-m,—I will explain to-morrow,—ehem, e-h-e-m.' I made to the door; all the eyes in the room seemed turned into burning-glasses, and blistered the very skin on my face. I heard a gentle shriek, as I left the apartment, —Lady Margaret fainting, I suppose! There ended my courtship and my adventures in 'the best society.' I felt melancholy at the ill-success of my scheme. You must allow it was a magnificent project. What moral courage! I admire myself when I think of it. Without an introduction, without knowing a soul, to become, all by my own resolution, free of the finest houses in London, dancing with earls' daughters, and all but carrying off an earl's daughter myself as my

wife. If I had, the friends *must* have done something for me; and Lady Margaret Tomlinson might perhaps have introduced the youthful genius of her Augustus to parliament or the ministry. Oh, what a fall was there! Yet, faith, ha, ha, ha! I could not help laughing, despite of my chagrin, when I remembered that for three months I had imposed on these 'delicate exclusives,' and been literally invited by many of them, who would not have asked the younger sons of their own cousins, merely because I lived in a good street, avowed myself an only child, and talked of my property in Yorkshire! Ha, ha! how bitter the mercenary dupes must have felt when the discovery was made! What a pill for the good matrons who had coupled my image with that of some filial Mary or Jane, — ha, ha, ha! The triumph was almost worth the mortification. However, as I said before, I fell melancholy on it, especially as my duns became menacing. So I went to consult with my cousin the bookseller. He recommended me to compose for the journals, and obtained me an offer. I went to work very patiently for a short time, and contracted some agreeable friendships with gentlemen whom I met at an ordinary in St. James's. Still, my duns, though I paid them by dribblets, were the plague of my life. I confessed as much to one of my new friends. 'Come to Bath with me,' quoth he, 'for a week, and you shall return as rich as a Jew.' I accepted the offer, and went to Bath in my friend's chariot. He took the name of Lord Dunshunner, an Irish peer who had never been out of Tipperary, and was not therefore likely to be known at Bath. He took also a house for a year; filled it with wines, books, and a sideboard of plate. As he talked vaguely of setting up his younger brother to stand for the town at the next parliament, he bought these goods of the townspeople, in order to encourage their trade. I managed secretly to transport them to London and sell them; and as we disposed of them fifty per cent under cost price, our customers, the pawnbrokers, were not very inquisitive. We lived a jolly life at Bath for a couple of months, and departed one night, leaving our housekeeper to answer all interrogatories. We had taken the precaution to wear dis-

guises, stuffed ourselves out, and changed the hues of our hair. My noble friend was an adept in these transformations; and though the police did not sleep on the business, they never stumbled on us. I am especially glad we were not discovered, for I liked Bath excessively; and I intend to return there some of these days, and retire from the world — on an heiress!

“Well, Paul, shortly after this adventure I made your acquaintance. I continued ostensibly my literary profession, but only as a mask for the labours I did not profess. A circumstance obliged me to leave London rather precipitately. Lord Dunshunner joined me in Edinburgh. D— it, instead of doing anything *there*, we were done! The veriest urchin that ever crept through the High Street is more than a match for the most scientific of Englishmen. With us it is art; with the Scotch it is nature. They pick your pockets without using their fingers for it; and they prevent reprisal by having nothing for you to pick.

“We left Edinburgh with very long faces, and at Carlisle we found it necessary to separate. For my part, I went as a valet to a nobleman who had just lost his last servant at Carlisle by a fever; my friend gave me the best of characters! My new master was a very clever man. He astonished people at dinner by the impromptus he prepared at breakfast; in a word, he was a wit. He soon saw, for he was learned himself, that I had received a classical education, and he employed me in the confidential capacity of finding quotations for him. I classed these alphabetically and under three heads, — ‘Parliamentary, Literary, Dining-out.’ These were again subdivided into ‘Fine,’ ‘Learned,’ and ‘Jocular;’ so that my master knew at once where to refer for genius, wisdom, and wit. He was delighted with my management of his intellects. In compliment to him, I paid more attention to politics than I had done before; for he was a ‘great Whig,’ and uncommonly liberal in everything — but money! Hence, Paul, the origin of my political principles; and I thank Heaven there is not now a rogue in England who is a better — that is to say, more of a moderate — Whig than your humble servant! I continued with him nearly a year. He dis-

charged me for a fault worthy of my genius: other servants may lose the watch or the coat of their master; I went at nobler game, and lost him — *his private character!*”

“How do you mean?”

“Why, I was enamoured of a lady who would not have looked at me as Mr. Tomlinson; so I took my master’s clothes and occasionally his carriage, and made love to my nymph as Lord —. Her vanity made her indiscreet. The Tory papers got hold of it; and my master, in a change of ministers, was declared by George the Third to be ‘too gay for a Chancellor of the Exchequer.’ An old gentleman who had had fifteen children by a wife like a Gorgon, was chosen instead of my master; and although the new minister was a fool in his public capacity, the moral public were perfectly content with him, because of his *private virtues!*”

“My master was furious, made the strictest inquiry, *found* me out, and *turned* me out too!

“A Whig not in place has an excuse for disliking the Constitution. My distress almost made me a republican; but, true to my creed, I must confess that I would only have levelled upwards. I especially disaffected the inequality of riches; I looked moodily on every carriage that passed; I even frowned like a second Catiline at the steam of a gentleman’s kitchen! My last situation had not been lucrative; I had neglected my perquisites, in my ardour for politics. My master, too, refused to give me a character: who would take me without one?

“I was asking myself this melancholy question one morning, when I suddenly encountered one of the fine friends I had picked up at my old haunt, the ordinary, in St. James’s. His name was Pepper.”

“Pepper!” cried Paul.

Without heeding the exclamation, Tomlinson continued: —

“We went to a tavern and drank a bottle together. Wine made me communicative; it also opened my comrade’s heart. He asked me to take a ride with him that night towards Hounslow. I did so, and found a purse.”

“How fortunate! Where?”

"In a gentleman's pocket. I was so pleased with my luck that I went the same road twice a week, in order to see if I could pick up any *more* purses. Fate favoured me, and I lived for a long time the life of the blessed. Oh, Paul, you know not—you know not what a glorious life is that of a highwayman; but you shall taste it one of these days,—you shall, on my honour.

"I now lived with a club of honest fellows. We called ourselves 'The Exclusives,'—for we were mighty reserved in our associates, and only those who did business on a grand scale were admitted into our set. For my part, with all my love for my profession, I liked ingenuity still better than force, and preferred what the vulgar call swindling, even to the highroad. On an expedition of this sort, I rode once into a country town, and saw a crowd assembled in one corner; I joined it, and—guess my feelings!—beheld my poor friend Viscount Dunshunner just about to be hanged! I rode off as fast as I could,—I thought I saw Jack Ketch at my heels. My horse threw me at a hedge, and I broke my collar-bone. In the confinement that ensued gloomy ideas floated before me. I did not like to be hanged; so I reasoned against my errors, and repented. I recovered slowly, returned to town, and repaired to my cousin the bookseller. To say truth, I had played him a little trick: collected some debts of his by a mistake,—very natural in the confusion incident on my distresses. However, he was extremely unkind about it; and the mistake, natural as it was, had cost me his acquaintance.

"I went now to him with the penitential aspect of the prodigal son; and, faith, he would have not made a bad representation of the fatted calf about to be killed on my return,—so corpulent looked he, and so dejected! 'Graceless reprobate!' he began, 'your poor father is dead!' I was exceedingly shocked; but—never fear, Paul, I am not about to be pathetic. My father had divided his fortune among all his children; my share was £500. The possession of this sum made my penitence seem much more sincere in the eyes of my good cousin; and after a very pathetic scene, he took me once more into favour. I now consulted with him as to the best

method of laying out my capital and recovering my character. We could not devise any scheme at the first conference; but the second time I saw him, my cousin said with a cheerful countenance: 'Cheer up, Augustus, I have got thee a situation. Mr. Asgrave the banker will take thee as a clerk. He is a most worthy man; and having a vast deal of learning, he will respect thee for thy acquirements.' The same day I was introduced to Mr. Asgrave, who was a little man with a fine, bald, benevolent head; and after a long conversation which he was pleased to hold with me, I became one of his quill-drivers. I don't know how it was, but by little and little I rose in my master's good graces. I propitiated him, I fancy, by disposing of my £500 according to his advice; he laid it out for me, on what he said was famous security, on a landed estate. Mr. Asgrave was of social habits, — he had a capital house and excellent wines. As he was not very particular in his company, nor ambitious of visiting the great, he often suffered me to make one of his table, and was pleased to hold long arguments with me about the ancients. I soon found out that my master was a great moral philosopher; and being myself in weak health, sated with the ordinary pursuits of the world, in which my experience had forestalled my years, and naturally of a contemplative temperament, I turned my attention to the moral studies which so fascinated my employer. I read through nine shelves full of metaphysicians, and knew exactly the points in which those illustrious thinkers quarrelled with each other, to the great advance of the science. My master and I used to hold many a long discussion about the nature of good and evil; as, by help of his benevolent forehead and a clear dogged voice, he always seemed to our audience to be the wiser and better man of the two, he was very well pleased with our disputes. This gentleman had an only daughter, — an awful shrew, with a face like a hatchet: but philosophers overcome personal defects; and thinking only of the good her wealth might enable me to do to my fellow-creatures, I secretly made love to her. You will say that was playing my master but a scurvy trick for his kindness. Not at all; my master himself had convinced me that

there was no such virtue as gratitude. It was an error of vulgar moralists. I yielded to his arguments, and at length privately espoused his daughter. The day after this took place, he summoned me to his study. 'So, Augustus,' said he, very mildly, 'you have married my daughter: nay, never look confused; I saw a long time ago that you were resolved to do so, and I was very glad of it.'

"I attempted to falter out something like thanks. 'Never interrupt me!' said he. 'I had two reasons for being glad, —first, because my daughter was the plague of my life, and I wanted some one to take her off my hands; secondly, because I required your assistance on a particular point, and I could not venture to ask it of any one but my son-in-law. In fine, I wish to take you into partnership!'

"'Partnership!' cried I, falling on my knees. 'Noble, generous man!'

"'Stay a bit,' continued my father-in-law. 'What funds do you think requisite for carrying on a bank? You look puzzled! Not a shilling! You will put in just as much as I do. You will put in rather more; for you once put in £500, which has been spent long ago. I don't put in a shilling of my own. I live on my clients, and I very willingly offer you half of them!'

"Imagine, dear Paul, my astonishment, my dismay! I saw myself married to a hideous shrew, — son-in-law to a penniless scoundrel, and cheated out of my whole fortune! Compare this view of the question with that which had blazed on me when I contemplated being son-in-law to the rich Mr. Asgrave. I stormed at first. Mr. Asgrave took up Bacon 'On the Advancement of Learning,' and made no reply till I was cooled by explosion. You will perceive that when passion subsided, I necessarily saw that nothing was left for me but adopting my father-in-law's proposal. Thus, by the fatality which attended me at the very time I meant to reform, I was forced into scoundrelism, and I was driven into defrauding a vast number of persons by the accident of being son-in-law to a great moralist. As Mr. Asgrave was an indolent man, who passed his mornings in speculations on virtue.

I was made the active partner. I spent the day at the counting-house; and when I came home for recreation, my wife scratched my eyes out."

"But were you never recognized as 'the stranger' or 'the adventurer' in your new capacity?"

"No; for of course I assumed, in all my changes, both aliases and disguises. And, to tell you the truth, my marriage so altered me that, what with a snuff-coloured coat and a brown scratch wig, with a pen in my right ear, I looked the very picture of staid respectability. My face grew an inch longer every day. Nothing is so respectable as a long face; and a subdued expression of countenance is the surest sign of commercial prosperity. Well, we went on splendidly enough for about a year. Meanwhile I was wonderfully improved in philosophy. You have no idea how a scolding wife sublimates and rarefies one's intellect. Thunder clears the air, you know! At length, unhappily for my fame (for I contemplated a magnificent moral history of man, which, had she lived a year longer, I should have completed), my wife died in child-bed. My father-in-law and I were talking over the event, and finding fault with civilization for the enervating habits by which women die of their children instead of bringing them forth without being even conscious of the circumstance, when a bit of paper, sealed awry, was given to my partner. He looked over it, finished the discussion, and then told me our bank had stopped payment. 'Now, Augustus,' said he, lighting his pipe with the bit of paper, 'you see the good of having nothing to lose.'

"We did not pay quite sixpence in the pound; but my partner was thought so unfortunate that the British public raised a subscription for him, and he retired on an annuity, greatly respected and very much compassionated. As I had not been so well known as a moralist, and had not the prepossessing advantage of a bald, benevolent head, nothing was done for *me*, and I was turned once more on the wide world, to moralize on the vicissitudes of fortune. My cousin the bookseller was no more, and his son cut me. I took a garret in Warwick Court, and with a few books, my only consolation,

I endeavoured to nerve my mind to the future. It was at this time, Paul, that my studies really availed me. I meditated much, and I became a true philosopher, namely, a practical one. My actions were henceforth regulated by principle; and at some time or other, I will convince you that the road of true morals never avoids the pockets of your neighbour. So soon as my mind had made the grand discovery which Mr. Asgrave had made before me, that one should live according to a system, — for if you do wrong, it is then your system that errs, not you, — I took to the road, without any of those stings of conscience which had hitherto annoyed me in such adventures. I formed one of a capital knot of ‘Free Agents,’ whom I will introduce to you some day or other, and I soon rose to distinction among them. But about six weeks ago, not less than formerly preferring byways to highways, I attempted to possess myself of a carriage, and sell it at discount. I was acquitted on the felony, but sent hither by Justice Burnflat on the misdemeanour. Thus far, my young friend, hath as yet proceeded the life of Augustus Tomlinson.”

The history of this gentleman made a deep impression on Paul. The impression was strengthened by the conversations subsequently holden with Augustus. That worthy was a dangerous and subtle persuader. He had really read a good deal of history, and something of morals; and he had an ingenious way of defending his rascally practices by syllogisms from the latter, and examples from the former. These theories he clenched, as it were, by a reference to the existing politics of the day. Cheaters of the public, on false pretences, he was pleased to term “moderate Whigs;” bullying demanders of your purse were “high Tories;” and thieving in gangs was “the effect of the spirit of party.” There was this difference between Augustus Tomlinson and Long Ned, — Ned was the acting knave, Augustus the reasoning one; and we may see therefore, by a little reflection, that Tomlinson was a far more perilous companion than Pepper, — for showy theories are always more seductive to the young and clever than suasive examples, and the vanity of the youthful makes them better pleased by being convinced of a thing than by being enticed to it.

A day or two after the narrative of Mr. Tomlinson, Paul was again visited by Mrs. Lobkins, — for the regulations against frequent visitors were not then so strictly enforced as we understand them to be now; and the good dame came to deplore the ill-success of her interview with Justice Burnflat.

We spare the tender-hearted reader a detail of the affecting interview that ensued. Indeed, it was but a repetition of the one we have before narrated. We shall only say, as a proof of Paul's tenderness of heart, that when he took leave of the good matron, and bade "God bless her," his voice faltered, and the tears stood in his eyes, — just as they were wont to do in the eyes of George the Third, when that excellent monarch was pleased graciously to encore "God save the King!"

"I'll be hanged," soliloquized our hero, as he slowly bent his course towards the subtle Augustus, — "I'll be hanged (humph! the denunciation is prophetic), if I don't feel as grateful to the old lady for her care of me as if she had never ill-used me. As for my parents, I believe I have little to be grateful for or proud of in that quarter. My poor mother, by all accounts, seems scarcely to have had even the brute virtue of maternal tenderness; and in all human likelihood I shall never know whether I had one father or fifty. But what matters it? I rather like the better to be independent; and, after all, what do nine tenths of us ever get from our parents but an ugly name, and advice which, if we follow, we are wretched, and if we neglect, we are disinherited?"

Comforting himself with these thoughts, which perhaps took their philosophical complexion from the conversations he had lately held with Augustus, and which broke off into the muttered air of —

"Why should we quarrel for riches?"

Paul repaired to his customary avocations.

In the third week of our hero's captivity Tomlinson communicated to him a plan of escape that had occurred to his sagacious brain. In the yard appropriated to the amusements

of the gentlemen "misdemeaning," there was a water-pipe that, skirting the wall, passed over the door through which every morning the pious captives passed in their way to the chapel. By this Tomlinson proposed to escape; for to the pipe which reached from the door to the wall, in a slanting and easy direction, there was a sort of skirting-board; and a dexterous and nimble man might readily, by the help of this board, convey himself along the pipe, until the progress of that useful conductor (which was happily very brief) was stopped by the summit of the wall, where it found a sequel in another pipe, that descended to the ground on the opposite side of the wall. Now, on this opposite side was the garden of the prison; in this garden was a watchman, and this watchman was the hobgoblin of Tomlinson's scheme, — "For suppose us safe in the garden," said he, "what shall we do with this confounded fellow?"

"But that is not all," added Paul; "for even were there no watchman, there is a terrible wall, which I noted especially last week, when we were set to work in the garden, and which has no pipe, save a perpendicular one, that a man must have the legs of a fly to be able to climb!"

"Nonsense!" returned Tomlinson; "I will show you how to climb the stubbornest wall in Christendom, if one has but the coast clear. It is the watchman, the watchman, we must —"

"What?" asked Paul, observing his comrade did not conclude the sentence.

It was some time before the sage Augustus replied; he then said in a musing tone, —

"I have been thinking, Paul, whether it would be consistent with virtue, and that strict code of morals by which all my actions are regulated, to — slay the watchman!"

"Good heavens!" cried Paul, horror-stricken.

"And I have decided," continued Augustus, solemnly, without regard to the exclamation, "that the action would be perfectly justifiable!"

"Villain!" exclaimed Paul, recoiling to the other end of the stone box — for it was night — in which they were cooped,

"But," pursued Augustus, who seemed soliloquizing, and whose voice, sounding calm and thoughtful, like Young's in the famous monologue in "Hamlet," denoted that he heeded not the uncourteous interruption, — "but opinion does not always influence conduct; and although it may be virtuous to murder the watchman, I have not the heart to do it. I trust in my future history I shall not by discerning moralists be too severely censured for a weakness for which my physical temperament is alone to blame!"

Despite the turn of the soliloquy, it was a long time before Paul could be reconciled to further conversation with Augustus; and it was only from the belief that the moralist had leaned to the jesting vein that he at length resumed the consultation.

The conspirators did not, however, bring their scheme that night to any ultimate decision. The next day Augustus, Paul, and some others of the company were set to work in the garden; and Paul then observed that his friend, wheeling a barrow close by the spot where the watchman stood, overturned its contents. The watchman was good-natured enough to assist him in refilling the barrow; and Tomlinson profited so well by the occasion that that night he informed Paul that they would have nothing to dread from the watchman's vigilance. "He has promised," said Augustus, "for certain considerations, to allow me to knock him down; he has also promised to be so much hurt as not to be able to move until we are over the wall. Our main difficulty now, then, is the first step, — namely, to climb the pipe unperceived!"

"As to that," said Paul, who developed, through the whole of the scheme, organs of sagacity, boldness, and invention which charmed his friend, and certainly promised well for his future career, — "as to that, I think we may manage the first ascent with less danger than you imagine. The mornings of late have been very foggy; they are almost dark at the hour we go to chapel. Let you and I close the file: the pipe passes just above the door; our hands, as we have tried, can reach it; and a spring of no great agility will enable us to raise ourselves up to a footing on the pipe and the skirting-board.

The climbing then is easy; and what with the dense fog and our own quickness, I think we shall have little difficulty in gaining the garden. The only precautions we need use are, to wait for a very dark morning, and to be sure that we are the last of the file, so that no one behind may give the alarm — ”

“Or attempt to follow our example, and spoil the pie by a superfluous plum!” added Augustus. “You counsel admirably; and one of these days, if you are not hung in the mean while, will, I venture to auger, be a great logician.”

The next morning was clear and frosty; but the day after was, to use Tomlinson’s simile, “as dark as if all the negroes of Africa had been stewed down into air.” “You might have cut the fog with a knife,” as the proverb says. Paul and Augustus could not even see how significantly each looked at the other.

It was a remarkable trait of the daring temperament of the former, that, young as he was, it was fixed that he should lead the attempt. At the hour, then, for chapel the prisoners passed as usual through the door. When it came to Paul’s turn he drew himself by his hands to the pipe, and then creeping along its sinuous course, gained the wall before he had even fetched his breath. Rather more clumsily, Augustus followed his friend’s example. Once his foot slipped, and he was all but over. He extended his hands involuntarily, and caught Paul by the leg. Happily our hero had then gained the wall, to which he was clinging; and for once in a way, one rogue raised himself without throwing over another. Behold Tomlinson and Paul now seated for an instant on the wall to recover breath; the latter then, — the descent to the ground was not very great, — letting his body down by his hands, dropped into the garden.

“Hurt?” asked the prudent Augustus, in a hoarse whisper, before he descended from his “bad eminence,” being even willing —

“To bear those ills he had,
Than fly to others that he knew not of” —

without taking every previous precaution in his power.

"No!" was the answer in the same voice, and Augustus dropped.

So soon as this latter worthy had recovered the shock of his fall, he lost not a moment in running to the other end of the garden. Paul followed. By the way Tomlinson stopped at a heap of rubbish, and picked up an immense stone. When they came to the part of the wall they had agreed to scale, they found the watchman, — about whom they needed not, by the by, to have concerned themselves; for had it not been arranged that he was to have met them, the deep fog would have effectually prevented him from seeing them. This faithful guardian Augustus knocked down, not with a stone, but with ten guineas; he then drew forth from his dress a thickish cord, which he procured some days before from the turnkey, and fastening the stone firmly to one end, threw that end over the wall. Now the wall had (as walls of great strength mostly have) an overhanging sort of battlement on either side; and the stone, when flung over and drawn to the tether of the cord to which it was attached, necessarily hitched against this projection; and thus the cord was as it were fastened to the wall, and Tomlinson was enabled by it to draw himself up to the top of the barrier. He performed this feat with gymnastic address, like one who had often practised it; albeit the discreet adventurer had not mentioned in his narrative to Paul any previous occasion for the practice. As soon as he had gained the top of the wall, he threw down the cord to his companion, and, in consideration of Paul's inexperience in that manner of climbing, gave the fastening of the rope an additional security by holding it himself. With slowness and labour Paul hoisted himself up; and then, by transferring the stone to the other side of the wall, where it made of course a similar hitch, our two adventurers were enabled successively to slide down, and consummate their escape from the House of Correction.

"Follow me now!" said Augustus, as he took to his heels; and Paul pursued him through a labyrinth of alleys and lanes, through which he shot and dodged with a variable and shifting celerity that, had not Paul kept close upon him, would

very soon, combined with the fog, have snatched him from the eyes of his young ally. Happily the immaturity of the morning, the obscurity of the streets passed through, and above all, the extreme darkness of the atmosphere, prevented that detection and arrest which their prisoner's garb would otherwise have insured them. At length they found themselves in the fields; and skulking along hedges, and diligently avoiding the highroad, they continued to fly onward, until they had advanced several miles into "the bowels of the land." At that time "the bowels" of Augustus Tomlinson began to remind him of their demands; and he accordingly suggested the *desirability* of their seizing the first peasant they encountered, and causing him to exchange clothes with one of the fugitives, who would thus be enabled to enter a public-house and provide for their mutual necessities. Paul agreed to this proposition, and accordingly they watched their opportunity and *caught* a ploughman. Augustus stripped him of his frock, hat, and worsted stockings; and Paul, hardened by necessity and companionship, helped to tie the poor ploughman to a tree. They then continued their progress for about an hour, and, as the shades of evening fell around them, they discovered a public-house. Augustus entered, and returned in a few minutes laden with bread and cheese, and a bottle of beer. Prison fare cures a man of daintiness, and the two fugitives dined on these homely viands with considerable complacency. They then resumed their journey, and at length, wearied with exertion, they arrived at a lonely haystack, where they resolved to repose for an hour or two.

CHAPTER X.

UNLIKE the ribald, whose licentious jest
 Pollutes his banquet, and insults his guest,
 From wealth and grandeur easy to descend,
 Thou joy'st to lose the master in the friend.
 We round thy board the cheerful menials see,
 Gay with the smile of bland equality;
 No social care the gracious lord disdains;
 Love prompts to love, and reverence reverence gains.

*Translation of LUCAN to PISO,
 Prefixed to the Twelfth Paper of "The Rambler."*

COYLY shone down the bashful stars upon our adventurers, as, after a short nap behind the haystack, they stretched themselves, and looking at each other, burst into an involuntary and hilarious laugh at the prosperous termination of their exploit.

Hitherto they had been too occupied, first by their flight, then by hunger, then by fatigue, for self-gratulation; now they rubbed their hands, and joked like runaway schoolboys at their escape.

By degrees their thoughts turned from the past to the future; and "Tell me, my dear fellow," said Augustus, "what you intend to do. I trust I have long ago convinced you that it is no sin 'to serve our friends' and to 'be true to our party;' and therefore, I suppose, you will decide upon taking to the road."

"It is very odd," answered Paul, "that I should have any scruples left after your lectures on the subject; but I own to you frankly that, somehow or other, I have doubts whether thieving be really the honestest profession I could follow."

"Listen to me, Paul," answered Augustus; and his reply is not unworthy of notice. "All crime and all excellence depend upon a good choice of words. I see you look puzzled; I will explain. If you take money from the public, and say you

have robbed, you have indubitably committed a great crime; but if you do the same, and say you have *been relieving the necessities of the poor*, you have done an excellent action. If, in afterwards dividing this money with your companions, you say you have been sharing booty, you have committed an offence against the laws of your country; but if you observe that *you have been sharing with your friends the gains of your industry*, you have been performing one of the noblest actions of humanity. To knock a man on the head is neither virtuous nor guilty, but it depends upon the language applied to the action to make it murder or glory.¹ Why not say, then, that you have testified *the courage of a hero*, rather than *the atrocity of a ruffian*? This is perfectly clear, is it not?"

"It seems so," answered Paul.

"It is so self-evident that it is the way all governments are carried on. Wherefore, my good Paul, we only do what all other legislators do. We are never rogues so long as we call ourselves honest fellows, and we never commit a crime so long as we can term it a virtue. What say you now?"

Paul smiled, and was silent a few moments before he replied: "There is very little doubt but that you are wrong; yet if you are, so are all the rest of the world. It is of no use to be the only white sheep of the flock. Wherefore, my dear Tomlinson, I will in future be an excellent citizen, *relieve the necessities of the poor*, and *share the gains of my industry with my friends*."

"Bravo!" cried Tomlinson. "And now that that is settled, the sooner you are inaugurated the better. Since the starlight has shone forth, I see that I am in a place I ought to be very well acquainted with; or, if you like to be suspicious, you may believe that I have brought you purposely in this direc-

¹ We observe in a paragraph from an American paper, copied without comment into the "Morning Chronicle," a singular proof of the truth of Tomlinson's philosophy! "Mr. Rowland Stephenson," so runs the extract, "*the celebrated English banker*, has just purchased a considerable tract of land," etc. Most philosophical of paragraphists! "*Celebrated English banker*!" — that sentence is a better illustration of verbal fallacies than all Bentham's treatises put together. "*Celebrated*!" O Mercury, what a dexterous epithet!

tion. But first let me ask if you feel any great desire to pass the night by this haystack, or whether you would like a song and the punchbowl almost as much as the open air, with the chance of being eaten up in a pinch of hay by some strolling cow."

"You may conceive my choice," answered Paul.

"Well, then, there is an excellent fellow near here, who keeps a public-house, and is a firm ally and generous patron of the lads of the cross. At certain periods they hold weekly meetings at his house: this is one of the nights. What say you? Shall I introduce you to the club?"

"I shall be very glad if they will admit me," returned Paul, whom many and conflicting thoughts rendered laconic.

"Oh! no fear of that, under my auspices. To tell you the truth, though we are a tolerant set, we welcome every new proselyte with enthusiasm. But are you tired?"

"A little; the house is not far, you say?"

"About a mile off," answered Tomlinson. "Lean on me."

Our wanderers now, leaving the haystack, struck across part of Finchley Common; for the abode of the worthy publican was felicitously situated, and the scene in which his guests celebrated their festivities was close by that on which they often performed their exploits.

As they proceeded, Paul questioned his friend touching the name and character of "mine host;" and the all-knowing Augustus Tomlinson answered him, Quaker-like, by a question, —

"Have you never heard of Gentleman George?"

"What! the noted head of a flash public-house in the country? To be sure I have, often; my poor nurse, Dame Lobkins, used to say he was the best-spoken man in the trade!"

"Ay, so he is still. In his youth, George was a very handsome fellow, but a little too fond of his lass and his bottle to please his father, — a very staid old gentleman, who walked about on Sundays in a bob-wig and a gold-headed cane, and was a much better farmer on week-days than he was head of a public-house. George used to be a remarkably smart-dressed fellow, and so he is to this day. He has a great deal of wit,

is a very good whist-player, has a capital cellar, and is so fond of seeing his friends drunk, that he bought some time ago a large pewter measure in which six men can stand upright. The girls, or rather the old women, to which last he used to be much more civil of the two, always liked him; they say nothing is so fine as his fine speeches, and they give him the title of '*Gentleman George*.' He is a nice, kind-hearted man in many things. Pray Heaven we shall have no cause to miss him when he departs! But, to tell you the truth, he takes more than his share of our common purse."

"What! is he avaricious?"

"Quite the reverse; but he's so cursedly fond of building, he invests all *his* money (and wants us to invest all *ours*) in houses; and there's one confounded dog of a bricklayer who runs him up terrible bills, — a fellow called '*Cunning Nat*,' who is equally adroit in spoiling ground and improving *ground rent*."

"What do you mean?"

"Ah! thereby hangs a tale. But we are near the place now; you will see a curious set."

As Tomlinson said this, the pair approached a house standing alone, and seemingly without any other abode in the vicinity. It was of curious and grotesque shape, painted white, with a Gothic chimney, a Chinese sign-post (on which was depicted a gentleman fishing, with the words "*The Jolly Angler*" written beneath), and a porch that would have been Grecian if it had not been Dutch. It stood in a little field, with a hedge behind it, and the common in front. Augustus stopped at the door; and while he paused, bursts of laughter rang cheerily within.

"Ah, the merry boys!" he muttered; "I long to be with them;" and then with his clenched fist he knocked four times on the door. There was a sudden silence which lasted about a minute, and was broken by a voice within, asking who was there. Tomlinson answered by some cabalistic word; the door was opened, and a little boy presented himself.

"Well, my lad," said Augustus, "and how is your master? Stout and hearty, if I may judge by his voice."

"Ay, Master Tommy, ay, he's boosing away at a fine rate, in the back-parlour, with Mr. Pepper and Fighting Attie, and half-a-score more of them. He'll be woundy glad to see you, I'll be bound."

"Show this gentleman into the bar," rejoined Augustus, "while I go and pay my respects to honest Geordie."

The boy made a sort of a bow, and leading our hero into the bar, consigned him to the care of Sal, a buxom barmaid, who reflected credit on the taste of the landlord, and who received Paul with marked distinction and a gill of brandy.

Paul had not long to play the amiable, before Tomlinson rejoined him with the information that Gentleman George would be most happy to see him in the back-parlour, and that he would there find an old friend in the person of Mr. Pepper.

"What! is he here?" cried Paul. "The sorry knave, to let me be caged in his stead!"

"Gently, gently; no misapplication of terms!" said Augustus. "That was not knavery; that was *prudence*, the greatest of all virtues, and the rarest. But come along, and Pepper shall *explain* to-morrow."

Threading a gallery or passage, Augustus preceded our hero, opened a door, and introduced him into a long low apartment, where sat, round a table spread with pipes and liquor, some ten or a dozen men, while at the top of the table, in an armchair, presided Gentleman George. That dignitary was a portly and comely gentleman, with a knowing look, and a Welsh wig, worn, as the "Morning Chronicle" says of his Majesty's hat, "in a *dégagé* manner, on one side." Being afflicted with the gout, his left foot reclined on a stool; and the attitude developed, despite of a lamb's-wool stocking, the remains of an exceedingly good leg.

As Gentleman George was a person of majestic dignity among the Knights of the Cross, we trust we shall not be thought irreverent in applying a few of the words by which the aforesaid "Morning Chronicle" depicted his Majesty on the day he laid the first stone of his father's monument to the description of Gentleman George.

"He had on a handsome blue coat and a white waistcoat;" moreover, "he laughed most good-humouredly," as, turning to Augustus Tomlinson, he saluted him with, —

"So this is the youngster you present to us? Welcome to the Jolly Angler! Give us thy hand, young sir; I shall be happy to blow a cloud with thee."

"With all due submission," said Mr. Tomlinson, "I think it may first be as well to introduce my pupil and friend to his future companions."

"You speak like a leary cove," cried Gentleman George, still squeezing our hero's hand; and turning round in his elbow-chair, he pointed to each member, as he severally introduced his guests to Paul.

"Here," said he, — "here's a fine chap at my right hand" (the person thus designated was a thin military-looking figure, in a shabby riding-frock, and with a commanding, bold, aquiline countenance, a little the worse for wear), — "here's a fine chap for you! Fighting Attie we calls him; he's a devil on the road. 'Halt, — deliver, — must and shall, — can't and sha'n't, — do as I bid you, or go to the devil!' That's all Fighting Attie's palaver; and, 'Sdeath, it has a wonderful way of coming to the point! A famous cull is my friend Attie, — an old soldier, — has seen the world, and knows what is what; has lots of gumption, and devil a bit of blarney. Howsomever, the highflyers does n't like him; and when he takes people's money, he need not be quite so cross about it. Attie, let me introduce a new pal to you." Paul made his bow.

"Stand at ease, man!" quoth the veteran, without taking the pipe from his mouth.

Gentleman George then continued; and after pointing out four or five of the company (among whom our hero discovered, to his surprise, his old friends Mr. Eustace Fitzherbert and Mr. William Howard Russell), came, at length, to one with a very red face and a lusty frame of body. "That gentleman," said he, "is Scarlet Jem; a dangerous fellow for a *press*, though he says he likes robbing alone now, for a general press is not half such a good thing as it used to be formerly. You have

no idea what a hand at disguising himself Scarlet Jem is. He has an old wig which he generally does business in; and you would not go for to know him again when he conceals himself under the *wig*. Oh, he's a precious rogue, is Scarlet Jem! As for the cove on t'other side," continued the host of the Jolly Angler, pointing to Long Ned, "all I can say of him, good, bad, or indifferent, is that he has an unkimmon fine head of hair; and now, youngster, as you knows him, s'pose you goes and sits by him, and he'll introduce you to the rest; for, split my wig!" (Gentleman George was a bit of a swearer) "if I be n't tired; and so here's to your health; and if so be as your name's Paul, may you always rob *Peter*¹ in order to pay *Paul*!"

This witticism of mine host's being exceedingly well received, Paul went, amidst the general laughter, to take possession of the vacant seat beside Long Ned. That tall gentleman, who had hitherto been cloud-compelling (as Homer calls Jupiter) in profound silence, now turned to Paul with the warmest cordiality, declared himself overjoyed to meet his old friend once more, and congratulated him alike on his escape from Bridewell and his admission to the councils of Gentleman George. But Paul, mindful of that exertion of "prudence" on the part of Mr. Pepper by which he had been left to his fate and the mercy of Justice Burnflat, received his advances very sullenly. This coolness so incensed Ned, who was naturally choleric, that he turned his back on our hero, and being of an aristocratic spirit, muttered something about "upstart, and vulgar clyfakers being admitted to the company of swell tobymen." This murmur called all Paul's blood into his cheek; for though he had been punished as a clyfaker (or pickpocket), nobody knew better than Long Ned whether or not he was innocent; and a reproach from him came therefore with double injustice and severity. In his wrath he seized Mr. Pepper by the ear, and telling him he was a shabby scoundrel, challenged him to fight.

So pleasing an invitation not being announced *sotto voce*, but in a tone suited to the importance of the proposi-

¹ *Peter*, a portmanteau.

tion, every one around heard it; and before Long Ned could answer, the full voice of Gentleman George thundered forth, —

“Keep the peace there, you youngster! What! are you just admitted into our merry-makings, and must you be wrangling already? Harkye, gemmen, I have been plagued enough with your quarrels before now; and the first cove as breaks the present quiet of the Jolly Angler shall be turned out neck and crop, — sha’ n’t he, Attie?”

“Right about, march!” said the hero.

“Ay, that’s the word, Attie,” said Gentleman George. “And now, Mr. Pepper, if there be any ill blood ’twixt you and the lad there, wash it away in a bumper of bingo, and let’s hear no more whatsomever about it.”

“I’m willing,” cried Long Ned, with the deferential air of a courtier, and holding out his hand to Paul. Our hero, being somewhat abashed by the novelty of his situation and the rebuke of Gentleman George, accepted, though with some reluctance, the proffered courtesy.

Order being thus restored, the conversation of the convivialists began to assume a most fascinating bias. They talked with infinite *goût* of the sums they had levied on the public, and the peculations they had committed for what one called the *good of the community*, and another, the *established order*, — meaning themselves. It was easy to see in what school the discerning Augustus Tomlinson had learned the value of words.

There was something edifying in hearing the rascals! So nice was their language, and so honest their enthusiasm for their own interests, you might have imagined you were listening to a coterie of cabinet ministers conferring on taxes or debating on perquisites.

“Long may the *Commons* flourish!” cried punning Georgie, filling his glass; “it is by the commons we’re fed, and may they never know cultivation!”

“Three times three!” shouted Long Ned; and the toast was drunk as Mr. Pepper proposed.

“A little moderate cultivation of the commons, to speak

frankly," said Augustus Tomlinson, modestly, "might not be amiss; for it would decoy people into the belief that they might travel safely; and, after all, a hedge or a barley-field is as good for us as a barren heath, where we have no shelter if once pursued!"

"You talks nonsense, you spooney!" cried a robber of note, called Bagshot; who, being aged and having been a lawyer's footboy, was sometimes denominated "Old Bags." "You talks nonsense; these innowating ploughs are the ruin of us. Every blade of corn in a common is an encroachment on the constitution and rights of the gemmen highwaymen. I'm old, and may n't live to see these things; but, mark my words, a time will come when a man may go from Lunnun to Johnny Groat's without losing a penny by one of us; when Hounslow will be safe, and Finchley secure. My eyes, what a sad thing for us that 'll be!"

The venerable old man became suddenly silent, and the tears started to his eyes. Gentleman George had a great horror of blue devils, and particularly disliked all disagreeable subjects.

"Thunder and oons, Old Bags!" quoth mine host of the Jolly Angler, "this will never do; we're all met here to be merry, and not to listen to your mullancolly taratarantarums. I says, Ned Pepper, s'pose you tips us a song, and I'll beat time with my knuckles."

Long Ned, taking the pipe from his mouth, attempted, like Walter Scott's Lady Heron, one or two pretty excuses; these being drowned by a universal shout, the handsome purloiner gave the following song, to the tune of "Time has not thinned my flowing hair."

LONG NED'S SONG.

I.

Oh, if my hands adhere to cash,
My gloves at least are clean,
And rarely have the gentry flash
In sprucer clothes been seen.

II.

Sweet Public, since your coffers must
Afford our wants relief,
Oh! soothes it not to yield the dust
To such a charming thief?

III.

I never robbed a single coach
But with a lover's air;
And though you might my *course* reproach,
You never could my *hair*.

IV.

John Bull, who loves a harmless joke,
Is apt at me to grin;
But why be cross with laughing folk,
Unless they laugh and win?

V.

John Bull has money in his box;
And though his wit's divine,
Yet let me laugh at Johnny's *locks*,
And John may laugh at mine!

"And John may laugh at mine," — excellent!" cried Gentleman George, lighting his pipe, and winking at Attie; "I hears as how you be a famous fellow with the lasses."

Ned smiled and answered, "No man should boast; but—" Pepper paused significantly, and then glancing at Attie, said, "Talking of lasses, it is my turn to knock down a gentleman for a song, and I knock down Fighting Attie."

"I never sing," said the warrior.

"Treason, treason!" cried Pepper. "It is the law, and you must obey the law; so begin."

"It is true, Attie," said Gentleman George.

There was no appeal from the honest publican's fiat; so, in a quick and laconic manner, it being Attie's favourite dogma

that the least said is the soonest mended, the warrior sung as follows:—

FIGHTING ATTIE'S SONG.

Air: "He was famed for deeds of arms."

Rise at six, dine at two,
Rob your man without ado,—
Such my maxims; if you doubt
Their wisdom, to the right-about!

(*Signing to a sallow gentleman on the same side of the table to send up the brandy bowl.*)

Pass round the bingo,— of a gun,
You musty, dusky, *husky son*! ¹

THE SALLOW GENTLEMAN (*in a hoarse voice*).

Attie, the bingo's now with me;
I can't resign it yet, d'ye see!

ATTIE (*seizing the bowl*).

Resign, resign it, — cease your dust!

(*Wresting it away and fiercely regarding the sallow gentleman.*)

You have resigned it, and you must.

CHORUS.

You have resigned it, and you must.

While the chorus, laughing at the discomfited tippler, yelled forth the emphatic words of the heroic Attie, that personage emptied the brandy at a draught, resumed his pipe, and in as few words as possible called on Bagshot for a song. The excellent old highwayman, with great diffidence, obeyed the request, cleared his throat, and struck off with a ditty somewhat to the tune of "The Old Woman."

¹ Much of whatever amusement might be occasioned by the not (we trust) ill-natured travesties of certain eminent characters in this part of our work when first published, like all political allusions, loses point and becomes obscure as the applications cease to be familiar. It is already necessary, perhaps, to say that Fighting Attie herein typifies or illustrates the Duke of Wellington's abrupt dismissal of Mr. Huskisson.

OLD BAGS'S SONG.

Are the days then gone, when on Hounslow Heath
 We flashed our nags,
 When the stoutest bosoms quailed beneath
 The voice of Bags?
 Ne'er was my work half undone, lest
 I should be nabbed:
 Slow was old Bags, but he never ceased
 Till the whole was grabbed.

CHORUS.

Till the whole was grabbed.

When the slow coach paused, and the gemmen stormed,
 I bore the brunt;
 And the only sound which my grave lips formed
 Was "blunt," — still "blunt"! —
 Oh, those jovial days are ne'er forgot!
 But the tape lags —
 When I be's dead, you'll drink one pot
 To poor old Bags!

CHORUS.

To poor old Bags!

"Ay, that we will, my dear Bagshot," cried Gentleman George, affectionately; but observing a tear in the fine old fellow's eye, he added: "Cheer up! What, ho! cheer up! Times will improve, and Providence may yet send us one good year, when you shall be as well off as ever. You shakes your poll. Well, don't be humdurgoned, but knock down a gemman."

Dashing away the drop of sensibility, the veteran knocked down Gentleman George himself.

"Oh, dang it!" said George, with an air of dignity, "I ought to skip, since I finds the lush; but howsomever here goes."

GENTLEMAN GEORGE'S SONG.

Air: "Old King Cole."

I be's the cove, the merry old cove,
 Of whose max all the rufflers sing;
 And a lushing cove, I thinks, by Jove,
 Is as great as a sober king!

CHORUS.

Is as great as a sober king!

Whatever the noise as is made by the boys
At the bar as they lush away,
The devil a noise my peace alloys
As long as the rascals pay!

CHORUS.

As long as the rascals pay!

What if I sticks my stones and my bricks
With mortar I takes from the snobbish?
All who can feel for the public weal
Likes the public-house to be bobbish.

CHORUS.

Likes the public-house to be bobbish.

"There, gemmen!" said the publican, stopping short, "that's the pith of the matter, and split my wig but I'm short of breath now. So send round the brandy, Augustus; you sly dog, you keeps it all to yourself."

By this time the whole conclave were more than half-seas over, or, as Augustus Tomlinson expressed it, "their more austere qualities were relaxed by a pleasing and innocent indulgence." Paul's eyes reeled, and his tongue ran loose. By degrees the room swam round, the faces of his comrades altered, the countenance of Old Bags assumed an awful and menacing air. He thought Long Ned insulted him, and that Old Bags took the part of the assailant, doubled his fist, and threatened to put the plaintiff's nob into chancery if he disturbed the peace of the meeting. Various other imaginary evils beset him. He thought he had robbed a mail-coach in company with Pepper; that Tomlinson informed against him, and that Gentleman George ordered him to be hanged; in short, he laboured under a temporary delirium, occasioned by a sudden reverse of fortune, — from water to brandy; and the last thing of which he retained any recollection, before he sank under the table, in company with Long Ned, Scarlet Jem, and Old Bags, was the bearing his part in the burden of what appeared to him a chorus of last dying speeches and

confessions, but what in reality was a song made in honour of Gentleman George, and sung by his grateful guests as a finale of the festivities. It ran thus:—

THE ROBBER'S GRAND TOAST.

A tumbler of blue ruin, fill, fill for me!
 Red tape those as likes it may drain;
 But whatever the lush, it a bumper must be,
 If we ne'er drinks a bumper again!
 Now — now in the crib, where a ruffler may lie,
 Without fear that the traps should distress him,
 With a drop in the mouth, and a drop in the eye,
 Here 's to Gentleman George, — God bless him!
 God bless him, God bless him!
 Here 's to Gentleman George, — God bless him!

'Mong the pals of the prince I have heard it's the go,
 Before they have tippled enough,
 To smarten their punch with the best curaçoa,
 More conish to render the stuff.
 I boast not such lush; but whoever his glass
 Does not like, I'll be hanged if I press him!
 Upstanding, my kiddies, — round, round let it pass!
 Here 's to Gentleman George, — God bless him!
 God bless him, God bless him!
 Here 's to Gentleman George, — God bless him!

See, see, the fine fellow grows weak on his stumps;
 Assist him, ye rascals, to stand!
 Why, ye stir not a peg! Are you all in the dumps?
 Fighting Attie, go, lend him a hand!

(The robbers crowd around Gentleman George, each, under pretence of supporting him, pulling him first one way and then another.)

Come, lean upon me, — at your service I am!
 Get away from his elbow, you whelp! him
 You'll only upset, — them 'ere fellows but sham!
 Here 's to Gentleman George, — God help him!
 God help him, God help him!
 Here 's to Gentleman George, God help him!

CHAPTER XI.

I BOAST no song in magic wonders rife ;
But yet, O Nature ! is there nought to prize,
Familiar in thy bosom scenes of life ?
And dwells in daylight truth's salubrious skies
No form with which the soul may sympathize ?
Young, innocent, on whose sweet forehead mild
The parted ringlet shone in simplest guise,
An inmate in the home of Albert smiled,
Or blessed his noonday walk, — she was his only child.

Gertrude of Wyoming.

O TIME, thou hast played strange tricks with us; and we bless the stars that made us a novelist, and permit us now to retaliate. Leaving Paul to the instructions of Augustus Tomlinson and the festivities of the Jolly Angler, and suffering him, by slow but sure degrees, to acquire the graces and the reputation of the accomplished and perfect appropriator of other men's possessions, we shall pass over the lapse of years with the same heedless rapidity with which they have glided over us, and summon our reader to a very different scene from those which would be likely to greet his eyes, were he following the adventures of our new Telemachus. Nor wilt thou, dear reader, whom we make the umpire between ourself and those who never read, — the critics; thou who hast, in the true spirit of gentle breeding, gone with us among places where the novelty of the scene has, we fear, scarcely atoned for the coarseness, not giving thyself the airs of a dainty abigail, — not prating, lacquey-like, on the low company thou has met, — nor wilt thou, dear and friendly reader, have cause to dread that we shall weary thy patience by a "damnable iteration" of the same localities. Pausing for a moment to glance over the divisions of our story, which lies before us like a map, we feel that we may promise in future to conduct thee among aspects of society more familiar

to thy habits; where events flow to their allotted gulf through landscapes of more pleasing variety and among tribes of a more luxurious civilization.

Upon the banks of one of fair England's fairest rivers, and about fifty miles distant from London, still stands an old-fashioned abode, which we shall here term Warlock Manor-house. It is a building of brick, varied by stone copings, and covered in great part with ivy and jasmine. Around it lie the ruins of the elder part of the fabric; and these are sufficiently numerous in extent and important in appearance to testify that the mansion was once not without pretensions to the magnificent. These remains of power, some of which bear date as far back as the reign of Henry the Third, are sanctioned by the character of the country immediately in the vicinity of the old manor-house. A vast tract of waste land, interspersed with groves of antique pollards, and here and there irregular and sinuous ridges of green mound, betoken to the experienced eye the evidence of a dismantled chase or park, which must originally have been of no common dimensions. On one side of the house the lawn slopes towards the river, divided from a terrace, which forms the most important embellishment of the pleasure-grounds, by that fence to which has been given the ingenious and significant name of "ha-ha!" A few scattered trees of giant growth are the sole obstacles that break the view of the river, which has often seemed to us, at that particular passage of its course, to glide with unusual calmness and serenity. On the opposite side of the stream there is a range of steep hills, celebrated for nothing more romantic than their property of imparting to the flocks that browse upon that short and seemingly stinted herbage a flavour peculiarly grateful to the lovers of that pastoral animal which changes its name into mutton after its decease. Upon these hills the vestige of human habitation is not visible; and at times, when no boat defaces the lonely smoothness of the river, and the evening has stilled the sounds of labour and of life, we know few scenes so utterly tranquil, so steeped in quiet, as that which is presented by the old, quaint-fashioned house and its antique grounds, —

the smooth lawn, the silent, and (to speak truly, though disparagingly) the somewhat sluggish river, together with the large hills (to which we know, from simple though metaphysical causes, how entire an idea of quiet and immovability peculiarly attaches itself), and the white flocks, — those most peaceful of God's creatures, — that in fleecy clusters stud the ascent.

In Warlock House, at the time we refer to, lived a gentleman of the name of Brandon. He was a widower, and had attained his fiftieth year without casting much regret on the past or feeling much anxiety for the future. In a word, Joseph Brandon was one of those careless, quiescent, indifferent men, by whom a thought upon any subject is never recurred to without a very urgent necessity. He was good-natured, inoffensive, and weak; and if he was not an incomparable citizen, he was at least an excellent vegetable. He was of a family of high antiquity, and formerly of considerable note. For the last four or five generations, however, the proprietors of Warlock House, gradually losing something alike from their acres and their consequence, had left to their descendants no higher rank than that of a small country squire. One had been a Jacobite, and had drunk out half-a-dozen farms in honour of Charley over the water; Charley over the water was no very dangerous person, but Charley over the wine was rather more ruinous. The next Brandon had been a fox-hunter, and fox-hunters live as largely as patriotic politicians. Pausanias tells us that the same people who were the most notorious for their love of wine were also the most notorious for their negligence of affairs. Times are not much altered since Pausanias wrote, and the remark holds as good with the English as it did with the Phigalei. After this Brandon came one who, though he did not scorn the sportsman, rather assumed the fine gentleman. He married an heiress, who of course assisted to ruin him; wishing *no* assistance in so pleasing an occupation, he overturned her (*perhaps* not on purpose), in a new sort of carriage which he was learning to drive, and the good lady was killed on the spot. She left the fine gentleman two sons, — Joseph Bran-

don, the presentthane, and a brother some years younger. The elder, being of a fitting age, was sent to school, and somewhat escaped the contagion of the paternal mansion. But the younger Brandon, having only reached his fifth year at the time of his mother's decease, was retained at home. Whether he was handsome or clever or impertinent, or like his father about the eyes (that greatest of all merits), we know not; but the widower became so fond of him that it was at a late period and with great reluctance that he finally intrusted him to the providence of a school.

Among harlots and gamblers and lords and sharpers, and gentlemen of the guards, together with their frequent accompaniments, — guards of the gentlemen, namely, bailiffs, — William Brandon passed the first stage of his boyhood. He was about thirteen when he was sent to school; and being a boy of remarkable talents, he recovered lost time so well that when at the age of nineteen he adjourned to the University, he had scarcely resided there a single term before he had borne off two of the highest prizes awarded to academical merit. From the University he departed on the "grand tour," at that time thought so necessary to complete the gentleman; he went in company with a young nobleman, whose friendship he had won at the University, stayed abroad more than two years, and on his return he settled down to the profession of the law.

Meanwhile his father died, and his fortune, as a younger brother, being literally next to nothing, and the family estate (for his brother was not *unwilling* to assist him) being terribly involved, it was believed that he struggled for some years with very embarrassed and penurious circumstances. During this interval of his life, however, he was absent from London, and by his brother supposed to have returned to the Continent; at length, it seems, he profited by a renewal of his friendship with the young nobleman who had accompanied him abroad, reappeared in town, and obtained through his noble friend one or two legal appointments of reputable emolument. Soon afterwards he got a brief on some cause where a major had been raising a corps to his brother officer, with the better consent of the brother-officer's wife than of the brother officer.

himself. Brandon's abilities here, for the first time in his profession, found an adequate vent; his reputation seemed made at once, he rose rapidly in his profession, and, at the time we now speak of, he was sailing down the full tide of fame and wealth, the envy and the oracle of all young Templars and barristers, who, having been starved themselves for ten years, began now to calculate on the possibility of starving their clients. At an early period in his career he had, through the good offices of the nobleman we have mentioned, obtained a seat in the House of Commons; and though his eloquence was of an order much better suited to the bar than the senate, he had nevertheless acquired a very considerable reputation in the latter, and was looked upon by many as likely to win to the same brilliant fortunes as the courtly Mansfield, — a great man, whose political principles and urbane address Brandon was supposed especially to affect as his own model. Of unblemished integrity in public life, — for, as he supported all things that exist with the most unbending rigidity, he could not be accused of inconsistency, — William Brandon was (as we have said in a former place of unhappy memory to our hero) esteemed in private life the most honourable, the most moral, even the most austere of men; and his grave and stern repute on this score, joined to the dazzle of his eloquence and forensic powers, had baffled in great measure the rancour of party hostility, and obtained for him a character for virtues almost as high and as enviable as that which he had acquired for abilities.

While William was thus treading a noted and an honourable career, his elder brother, who had married into a clergyman's family, and soon lost his consort, had with his only child, a daughter named Lucy, resided in his paternal mansion in undisturbed obscurity. The discreditable character and habits of the preceding lords of Warlock, which had sunk their respectability in the county as well as curtailed their property, had rendered the surrounding gentry little anxious to cultivate the intimacy of the present proprietor; and the heavy mind and retired manners of Joseph Brandon were not calculated to counterbalance the faults of his forefathers, nor

to reinstate the name of Brandon in its ancient popularity and esteem. Though dull and little cultivated, the squire was not without his "proper pride;" he attempted not to intrude himself where he was unwelcome, avoided county meetings and county balls, smoked his pipe with the parson, and not unoften with the surgeon and the solicitor, and suffered his daughter Lucy to educate herself with the help of the parson's wife, and to ripen (for Nature was more favourable to her than Art) into the very prettiest girl that the whole county — we long to say the whole country — at that time could boast of. Never did glass give back a more lovely image than that of Lucy Brandon at the age of nineteen. Her auburn hair fell in the richest luxuriance over a brow never ruffled, and a cheek where the blood never slept; with every instant the colour varied, and at every variation that smooth, pure, virgin cheek seemed still more lovely than before. She had the most beautiful laugh that one who loved music could imagine, — silvery, low, and yet so full of joy! All her movements, as the old parson said, seemed to keep time to that laugh, for mirth made a great part of her innocent and childish temper; and yet the mirth was feminine, never loud, nor like that of young ladies who had received the last finish at Highgate seminaries. Everything joyous affected her, and at once, — air, flowers, sunshine, butterflies. Unlike heroines in general, she very seldom cried, and she saw nothing charming in having the vapours. But she never looked so beautiful as in sleep; and as the light breath came from her parted lips, and the ivory lids closed over those eyes which only in sleep were silent, — and her attitude in her sleep took that ineffable grace belonging solely to childhood, or the fresh youth into which childhood merges, — she was just what you might imagine a sleeping Margaret, before that most simple and gentle of all a poet's visions of womanhood had met with Faust, or her slumbers been ruffled with a dream of love.

We cannot say much for Lucy's intellectual acquirements; she could, thanks to the parson's wife, spell indifferently well, and write a tolerable hand; she made preserves, and sometimes riddles, — it was more difficult to question the

excellence of the former than to answer the queries of the latter. She worked to the admiration of all who knew her, and we beg leave to say that we deem that "an excellent thing in woman." She made caps for herself and gowns for the poor, and now and then she accomplished the more literary labour of a stray novel that had wandered down to the Manor-house, or an abridgment of ancient history, in which was omitted everything but the proper names. To these attainments she added a certain modicum of skill upon the spinet, and the power of singing old songs with the richest and sweetest voice that ever made one's eyes moisten or one's heart beat.

Her moral qualities were more fully developed than her mental. She was the kindest of human beings; the very dog that had never seen her before knew that truth at the first glance, and lost no time in making her acquaintance. The goodness of her heart reposed upon her face like sunshine, and the old wife at the lodge said poetically and truly of the effect it produced, that "one felt warm when one looked on her." If we could abstract from the description a certain chilling transparency, the following exquisite verses of a forgotten poet¹ might express the purity and lustre of her countenance:—

"Her face was like the milky way i' the sky,
A meeting of gentle lights without a name."

She was surrounded by pets of all kinds, ugly and handsome,—from Ralph the raven to Beauty the pheasant, and from Bob, the sheep-dog without a tail, to Beau, the Blenheim with blue ribbons round his neck; all things loved her, and she loved all things. It seemed doubtful at that time whether she would ever have sufficient steadiness and strength of character. Her beauty and her character appeared so essentially womanlike—soft yet lively, buoyant yet caressing—that you could scarcely place in her that moral dependence that you might in a character less amiable but less yieldingly feminine. Time, however, and circumstance, which alter and harden, were to decide whether the inward nature did not pos-

¹ Suckling.

sess some latent and yet undiscovered properties. Such was Lucy Brandon in the year —; and in that year, on a beautiful autumnal evening, we first introduce her personally to our readers.

She was sitting on a garden-seat by the river side, with her father, who was deliberately conning the evening paper of a former week, and gravely seasoning the ancient news with the inspirations of that weed which so bitterly excited the royal indignation of our British Solomon. It happens, unfortunately for us, — for outward peculiarities are scarcely worthy the dignity to which comedy, whether in the drama or the narrative, aspires, — that Squire Brandon possessed so few distinguishing traits of mind that he leaves his delineator little whereby to designate him, save a confused and parenthetical habit of speech, by which he very often appeared to those who did not profit by long experience or close observation, to say exactly, and somewhat ludicrously, that which *he* did not mean to convey.

“I say, Lucy,” observed Mr. Brandon, but without lifting his eyes from the paper, — “I say, corn has fallen; think of that, girl, think of that! These times, in my opinion (ay, and in the opinion of wiser heads than mine, though I do not mean to say that I have not some experience in these matters, which is more than can be said of *all our neighbours*), *are very curious and even dangerous.*”

“Indeed, Papa!” answered Lucy.

“And I say, Lucy, dear,” resumed the squire, after a short pause, “there has been (and very strange it is, too, when one considers the crowded neighbourhood — Bless me! what times these are!) a shocking murder *committed upon (the tobacco stopper, — there it is) —* think, you know, girl, — just by Epping! — an old gentleman!”

“Dear, how shocking! By whom?”

“Ay, that’s the question! The coroner’s inquest has (what a blessing it is to live in a civilized country, where a man does not die without knowing the why and the wherefore!) sat on the body, and declared (it is very strange, but they don’t seem to have made much discovery; for why? **we**

knew as much before) that the body was found (it was found on the floor, Lucy) murdered; *murderer or murderers (in the bureau, which was broken open, they found the money left quite untouched) unknown!*"

Here there was again a slight pause; and passing to another side of the paper, Mr. Brandon resumed, in a quicker tone, —

"Ha! well, now this is odd! But he's a deuced clever fellow, Lucy! That brother of mine has (and in a very honourable manner, too, which I am sure is highly creditable to the family, though he has not taken too much notice of me lately, — a circumstance which, considering I am his elder brother, I am a little angry at) distinguished himself in a speech, remarkable, the paper says, for its great legal (I wonder, by the by, whether William could get me that agistment-money! 't is a heavy thing to lose; but going to law, as my poor father used to say, is like fishing for gudgeons [not a bad little fish; *we can have some for supper*] *with guineas*) knowledge, as well as its splendid and overpowering (I do love Will for keeping up the family honour; I am sure it is more than I have done, heigh-ho!), eloquence!"

"And on what subject has he been speaking, Papa?"

"Oh, a very fine subject; what you call a (it is astonishing that in this country there should be such a wish for taking away people's characters, which, for my part, I don't see is a bit more entertaining than what you are always doing, — playing with those stupid birds) libel!"

"But is not my uncle William coming down to see us? He promised to do so, and it made you quite happy, Papa, for two days. I hope he will not disappoint you; and I am sure that it is not his fault if he ever seems to neglect you. He spoke of you to me, when I saw him, in the kindest and most affectionate manner. I do think, my dear father, that he loves you very much."

"Ahem!" said the squire, evidently flattered, and yet not convinced. "My brother Will is a very acute fellow, and I make no — my dear little girl — question, but that (when you have seen as much of the world as I have, you will grow suspicious) he thought that any good word said of me to my

daughter would (you see, Lucy, I am as clear-sighted as my neighbours, though I don't give myself all their airs; which I very well might do, considering my great-great-great-grandfather, Hugo Brandon, had a hand in detecting the gunpowder plot) be told to me again!"

"Nay, but I am quite sure my uncle never spoke of you to me with that intention."

"Possibly, my dear child; but when (the evenings are much shorter than they were!) did you talk with your uncle about me?"

"Oh, when staying with Mrs. Warner, in London; to be sure, it is six years ago, but I remember it perfectly. I recollect, in particular, that he spoke of you very handsomely to Lord Mauleverer, who dined with him one evening when I was there, and when my uncle was so kind as to take me to the play. I was afterwards quite sorry that he was so good-natured, as he lost (you remember I told you the story) a very valuable watch."

"Ay, ay, I remember all about that, and so (how long friendship lasts with some people!) Lord Mauleverer dined with William! What a fine thing it is for a man (it is what I never did, indeed; I like being what they call 'Cock of the Walk' — let me see, now I think of it, Pillum comes to-night to play a hit at backgammon) to make friends with a great man early in (yet Will did not do it very early, poor fellow! He struggled first with a great deal of sorrow — hardship, that is) life! It is many years now since Will has been hand-and-glove with my ('tis a bit of a puppy) Lord Mauleverer. What did you think of his lordship?"

"Of Lord Mauleverer? Indeed I scarcely observed him; but he seemed a handsome man, and was very polite. Mrs. Warner said he had been a very wicked person when he was young, but he seems good-natured enough now, Papa."

"By the by," said the squire, "his lordship has just been made (this new ministry seems very unlike the old, which rather puzzles me; for I think it my duty, d'ye see, Lucy, always to vote for his Majesty's government, especially seeing that old Hugo Brandon had a hand in detecting the gun-

powder plot; and it is a little odd—at least, at first—to think that good now which one has always before been thinking abominable) Lord Lieutenant of the county.”

“Lord Mauleverer our Lord Lieutenant?”

“Yes, child; and since his lordship is such a friend of my brother, I should think, considering especially what an old family in the county we are, — not that I wish to intrude myself where I am not thought as fine as the rest, — that he would be more attentive to us than Lord —— was; but that, my dear Lucy, puts me in mind of Pillum; and so, perhaps, you would like to walk to the parson’s, as it is a fine evening. John shall come for you at nine o’clock *with* (*the moon is not up then*) the lantern.”

Leaning on his daughter’s willing arm, the good old man then rose and walked homeward; and so soon as she had wheeled round his easy-chair, placed the backgammon board on the table, and wished the old gentleman an easy victory over his expected antagonist, the apothecary, Lucy tied down her bonnet, and took her way to the rectory.

When she arrived at the clerical mansion and entered the drawing-room, she was surprised to find the parson’s wife, a good, homely, lethargic old lady, run up to her, seemingly in a state of great nervous agitation and crying, —

“Oh, my dear Miss Brandon! which way did you come? Did you meet nobody by the road? Oh, I am so frightened! Such an accident to poor dear Dr. Slopperton! Stopped in the king’s highway, robbed of some tithe-money he had just received from Farmer Slowforth! If it had not been for that dear angel, good young man, God only knows whether I might not have been a disconsolate widow by this time!”

While the affectionate matron was thus running on, Lucy’s eye glancing round the room discovered in an armchair the round and oily little person of Dr. Slopperton, with a countenance from which all the carnation hues, save in one circular excrescence on the nasal member, that was left, like the last rose of summer, blooming alone, were faded into an aspect of miserable pallor. The little man tried to conjure up a smile while his wife was narrating his misfortune, and to mutter

forth some syllable of unconcern; but he looked, for all his bravado, so exceedingly scared that Lucy would, despite herself, have laughed outright, had not her eye rested upon the figure of a young man who had been seated beside the reverend gentleman, but who had risen at Lucy's entrance, and who now stood gazing upon her intently, but with an air of great respect. Blushing deeply and involuntarily, she turned her eyes hastily away, and approaching the good doctor, made her inquiries into the present state of his nerves, in a graver tone than she had a minute before imagined it possible that she should have been enabled to command.

"Ah! my good young lady," said the doctor, squeezing her hand, "I—may, I may say the church—for am I not its minister?—was in imminent danger—but this excellent gentleman prevented the sacrilege, at least in great measure. I only lost some of my dues,—my rightful dues,—for which I console myself with thinking that the infamous and abandoned villain will suffer hereafter."

"There cannot be the least doubt of *that*," said the young man. "Had he only robbed the mail-coach, or broken into a gentleman's house, the offence might have been expiable; but to rob a clergyman, and a rector too!—Oh, the sacrilegious dog!"

"Your warmth does you honour, sir," said the doctor, beginning now to recover; "and I am very proud to have made the acquaintance of a gentleman of such truly religious opinions."

"Ah!" cried the stranger, "my foible, sir,—if I may so speak,—is a sort of enthusiastic fervour for the Protestant Establishment. Nay, sir, I never come across the very *nave* of the church without feeling an indescribable emotion—a kind of sympathy, as it were—with—with—you understand me, sir—I fear I express myself ill."

"Not at all, not at all!" exclaimed the doctor: "such sentiments are uncommon in one so young."

"Sir, I learned them early in life from a friend and preceptor of mine, Mr. MacGrawler, and I trust they may continue with me to my dying day."

Here the doctor's servant entered with (we borrow a phrase from the novel of —) "the tea-equipage;" and Mrs. Slopperton, betaking herself to its superintendence, inquired with more composure than hitherto had belonged to her demeanour, what sort of a looking creature the ruffian was.

"I will tell you, my dear, I will tell you, Miss Lucy, all about it. I was walking home from Mr. Slowforth's, with his money in my pocket, thinking, my love, of buying you that topaz cross you wished to have."

"Dear, good man!" cried Mrs. Slopperton; "what a fiend it must have been to rob so excellent a creature!"

"And," resumed the doctor, "it also occurred to me that the Madeira was nearly out, — the Madeira, I mean, with the red seal; and I was thinking it might not be amiss to devote part of the money to buy six dozen more; and the remainder, my love, which would be about one pound eighteen, I thought I would divide — 'for he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord!' — among the thirty poor families on the common; that is, if they behaved well, and the apples in the back garden were not feloniously abstracted!"

"Excellent, charitable man!" ejaculated Mrs. Slopperton.

"While I was thus meditating, I lifted my eyes, and saw before me two men, — one of prodigious height, and with a great profusion of hair about his shoulders; the other was smaller, and wore his hat slouched over his face: it was a very large hat. My attention was arrested by the singularity of the tall person's hair, and while I was smiling at its luxuriance, I heard him say to his companion, 'Well, Augustus, as you are such a moral dog, he is in your line, not mine; so I leave him to you.' Little did I think those words related to me. No sooner were they uttered than the tall rascal leaped over a gate and disappeared; the other fellow, then marching up to me, very smoothly asked me the way to the church, and while I was explaining to him to turn first to the right and then to the left, and so on, — for the best way is, you know, exceedingly crooked, — the hypocritical scoundrel seized me by the collar, and cried out, 'Your money or your life!' I do assure you that I never trembled

so much, — not, my dear Miss Lucy, so much for my own sake, as for the sake of the thirty poor families on the common, whose wants it had been my intention to relieve. I gave up the money, finding my prayers and expostulations were in vain; and the dog then, brandishing over my head an enormous bludgeon, said — what abominable language! — ‘I think, doctor, I shall put an end to an existence derogatory to yourself and useless to others.’ At that moment the young gentleman beside me sprang over the very gate by which the tall ruffian had disappeared, and cried, ‘Hold, villain!’ On seeing my deliverer, the coward started back, and plunged into a neighbouring wood. The good young gentleman pursued him for a few minutes, but then returning to my aid, conducted me home; and as we used to say at school, —

“*Te rediisse incolumem gaudeo,*’ —

which, being interpreted, means (sir, excuse a pun, I am sure so great a friend to the Church understands Latin) that I am very glad to get back safe to my tea. He! he! And now, Miss Lucy, you must thank that young gentleman for having saved the life of your pastoral teacher, which act will no doubt be remembered at the Great Day!”

As Lucy, looking towards the stranger, said something in compliment, she observed a vague, and as it were covert smile upon his countenance, which immediately and as if by sympathy conjured one to her own. The hero of the adventure, however, in a very grave tone replied to her compliment, at the same time bowing profoundly, —

“Mention it not, madam! I were unworthy of the name of a Briton and a man, could I pass the highway without relieving the distress or lightening the burden of a fellow-creature. And,” continued the stranger, after a momentary pause, colouring while he spoke, and concluding in the high-flown gallantry of the day, “methinks it were sufficient reward, had I saved the whole church instead of one of its most valuable members, to receive the thanks of a lady whom I might reasonably take for one of those celestial beings to whom we have been piously taught that the Church is especially the care!”

Though there might have been something really ridiculous in this overstrained compliment, coupled as it was with the preservation of Dr. Slopperton, yet, coming from the mouth of one whom Lucy thought the very handsomest person she had ever seen, it appeared to her anything but absurd; and for a very long time afterwards her heart thrilled with pleasure when she remembered that the cheek of the speaker had glowed, and his voice had trembled as he spoke it.

The conversation now, turning from robbers in particular, dwelt upon robberies in general. It was edifying to hear the honest indignation with which the stranger spoke of the lawless depredators with whom the country, in that day of Macheaths, was infested.

"A pack of infamous rascals!" said he, in a glow, "who attempt to justify their misdeeds by the example of honest men, and who say that they do no more than is done by lawyers and doctors, soldiers, clergymen, and ministers of State. Pitiful delusion, or rather shameless hypocrisy!"

"It all comes of educating the poor," said the doctor. "The moment they pretend to judge the conduct of their betters, there's an end of all order! They see nothing sacred in the laws, though we hang the dogs ever so fast; and the very peers of the land, spiritual and temporal, cease to be venerable in their eyes."

"Talking of peers," said Mrs. Slopperton, "I hear that Lord Mauleverer is to pass by this road to-night on his way to Mauleverer Park. Do you know his lordship, Miss Lucy? He is very intimate with your uncle."

"I have only seen him once," answered Lucy.

"Are you sure that his lordship will come this road?" asked the stranger, carelessly. "I heard something of it this morning, but did not know it was settled."

"Oh, quite so!" rejoined Mrs. Slopperton. "His lordship's gentleman wrote for post-horses to meet his lordship at Wyburn, about three miles on the other side of the village, at ten o'clock to-night. His lordship is very impatient of delay."

"Pray," said the doctor, who had not much heeded this turn

in the conversation, and was now "on hospitable cares intent," — "pray, sir, if not impertinent, are you visiting or lodging in the neighbourhood; or will you take a bed with us?"

"You are extremely kind, my dear sir, but I fear I must soon wish you good-evening. I have to look after a little property I have some miles hence, which, indeed, brought me down into this part of the world."

"Property! — in what direction, sir, if I may ask?" quoth the doctor; "I know the country for miles."

"Do you, indeed? Where's my property, you say? Why, it is rather difficult to describe it, and it is, after all, a mere trifle; it is only some common-land near the highroad, and I came down to try the experiment of *hedging and draining*."

"'Tis a good plan, if one has capital, and does not require a speedy return."

"Yes; but one likes a good interest *for the loss of principal*, and a *speedy return* is always desirable, — although, alas! it is often attended with risk!"

"I hope, sir," said the doctor, "if you must leave us so soon, that your property will often bring you into our neighbourhood."

"You overpower me with so much unexpected goodness," answered the stranger. "To tell you the truth, nothing can give me greater pleasure than to meet those again who have once obliged me."

"Whom you have obliged, rather!" cried Mrs. Slopperton; and then added, in a loud whisper to Lucy, "How modest! but it is always so with true courage!"

"I assure you, madam," returned the benevolent stranger, "that I never think twice of the little favours I render my fellow-men; my only hope is that they may be as forgetful as myself."

Charmed with so much unaffected goodness of disposition, the doctor and Mrs. Slopperton now set up a sort of duet in praise of their guest: after enduring their commendations and compliments for some minutes with much grimace of disavowal and diffidence, the stranger's modesty seemed at last to take pain at the excess of their gratitude; and accordingly,

pointing to the clock, which was within a few minutes to nine, he said, —

“I fear, my respected host and my admired hostess, that I must now leave you; I have far to go.”

“But are you yourself not afraid of the highwaymen?” cried Mrs. Slopperton, interrupting him.

“The highwaymen!” said the stranger, smiling; “no; I do not fear *them*; besides, I have little about me worth robbing.”

“Do you superintend your property yourself?” said the doctor, who farmed his own glebe and who, unwilling to part with so charming a guest, seized him now by the button.

“Superintend it myself! why, not exactly. There is a *bailiff*, whose views of things don’t agree with mine, and who now and then gives me a good deal of trouble.”

“Then why don’t you discharge him altogether?”

“Ah! I wish I could; but ’t is a necessary evil. We landed proprietors, my dear sir, must always be plagued with something of the sort. For my part, I have found those cursed bailiffs would take away, if they could, all the little property one has been trying to accumulate. But,” abruptly changing his manner into one of great softness, “could I not proffer my services and my companionship to this young lady? Would she allow me to conduct her home, and indeed stamp this day upon my memory as one of the few delightful ones I have ever known?”

“Thank you, dear sir,” said Mrs. Slopperton, answering at once for Lucy; “it is very considerate of you. — And I am sure, my love, I could not think of letting you go home alone with old John, after such an adventure to the poor dear doctor.”

Lucy began an excuse which the good lady would not hear. But as the servant whom Mr. Brandon was to send with a lantern to attend his daughter home had not arrived, and as Mrs. Slopperton, despite her prepossessions in favour of her husband’s deliverer, did not for a moment contemplate his accompanying, without any other attendance, her young friend across the fields at that unseasonable hour, the stranger was

forced, for the present, to re-assume his seat. An open harpsichord at one end of the room gave him an opportunity to make some remark upon music; and this introducing an eulogium on Lucy's voice from Mrs. Slopperton, necessarily ended in a request to Miss Brandon to indulge the stranger with a song. Never had Lucy, who was not a shy girl, — she was too innocent to be bashful, — felt nervous hitherto in singing before a stranger; but now she hesitated and faltered, and went through a whole series of little natural affectations before she complied with the request. She chose a song composed somewhat after the old English school, which at that time was reviving into fashion. The song, though conveying a sort of conceit, was not, perhaps, altogether without tenderness; it was a favourite with Lucy, she scarcely knew why, and ran thus: —

LUCY'S SONG.

Why sleep, ye gentle flowers, ah, why,
When tender eve is falling,
And starlight drinks the happy sigh
Of winds to fairies calling?

Calling with low and plaining note,
Most like a ringdove chiding,
Or flute faint-heard from distant boat
O'er smoothest waters gliding.

Lo, round you steals the wooing breeze;
Lo, on you falls the dew!
O sweets, awake, for scarcely these
Can charm while wanting you!

Wake ye not yet, while fast below
The silver time is fleeing?
O heart of mine, those flowers but show
Thine own contented being.

The twilight but preserves the bloom,
The sun can but decay;
The warmth that brings the rich perfume
But steals the life away.

O heart, enjoy thy present calm,
 Rest peaceful in the shade,
 And dread the sun that gives the balm
 To bid the blossom fade.

When Lucy ended, the stranger's praise was less loud than either the doctor's or his lady's; but how far more sweet it was! And for the first time in her life Lucy made the discovery that eyes can praise as well as lips. For our part, we have often thought that that discovery is an epoch in life.

It was now that Mrs. Slopperton declared her thorough conviction that the stranger himself could sing. He had that about him, she said, which made her sure of it.

"Indeed, dear madam," said he, with his usual undefinable, half-frank, half-latent smile, "my voice is but so-so, and my memory so indifferent that even in the easiest passages I soon come to a stand. My best notes are in the falsetto; and as for my *execution* — But we won't talk of *that*."

"Nay, nay; you are so modest," said Mrs. Slopperton. "I am sure you could oblige us if you would."

"Your command," said the stranger, moving to the harpsichord, "is all-sufficient; and since you, madam," turning to Lucy, "have chosen a song after the old school, may I find pardon if I do the same? My selection is, to be sure, from a lawless song-book, and is supposed to be a ballad by Robin Hood, or at least one of his merry men, — a very different sort of outlaws from the knaves who attacked you, sir!"

With this preface the stranger sung to a wild yet jovial air, with a tolerable voice, the following effusion: —

THE LOVE OF OUR PROFESSION; OR THE ROBBER'S LIFE.

On the stream of the world, the robber's life
 Is borne on the blithest wave;
 Now it bounds into light in a gladsome strife,
 Now it laughs in its hiding cave.

At his maiden's lattice he stays the rein;
 How still is his courser prond
 (But still as a wind when it hangs o'er the main
 In the breast of the boding cloud). —

With the champéd bit and the archéd crest,
 And the eye of a listening deer,
 Like valour, fretful most in rest,
 Least chafed when in career.

Fit slave to a lord whom all else refuse
 To save at his desperate need ;
 By my troth ! I think one whom the world pursues
 Hath a right to a gallant steed.

“ Away, my beloved, I hear their feet !
 I blow thee a kiss, my fair,
 And I promise to bring thee, when next we meet,
 A braid for thy bonny hair.

“ Hurrah ! for the booty ! — my steed, hurrah !
 Thorough bush, thorough brake, go we ;
 And the coy moon smiles on our merry way,
 Like my own love, — timidly.”

The parson he rides with a jingling pouch, —
 How it blabs of the rifled poor !
 The courtier he lolls in his gilded coach, —
 How it smacks of a sinecure !

The lawyer revolves in his whirling chaise
 Sweet thoughts of a mischief done ;
 And the lady that knoweth the card she plays
 Is counting her guineas won !

“ Ho, lady ! — What, holla, ye sinless men !
 My claim ye can scarce refuse ;
 For when honest folk live on their neighbours, then
 They encroach on the robber’s dues ! ”

The lady changed cheek like a bashful maid,
 The lawyer talked wondrous fair,
 The parson blasphemed, and the courtier prayed,
 And the robber bore off his share.

“ Hurrah ! for the revel ! my steed, hurrah !
 Thorough bush, thorough brake, go we !
 It is ever a virtue, when others pay,
 To ruffle it merrily ! ”

Oh, there never was life like the robber’s, — so
 Jolly and bold and free !
 And its end — why, a cheer from the crowd below,
 And a leap from a leafless tree !

This very moral lay being ended, Mrs. Sloperton declared it was excellent; though she confessed she thought the sentiments rather loose. Perhaps the gentleman might be induced to favour them with a song of a more refined and modern turn, — something sentimental, in short. Glancing towards Lucy, the stranger answered that he only knew one song of the kind Mrs. Sloperton specified, and it was so short that he could scarcely weary her patience by granting her request.

At this moment the river, which was easily descried from the windows of the room, glimmered in the starlight; and directing his looks towards the water, as if the scene had suggested to him the verses he sung, he gave the following stanzas in a very low, sweet tone, and with a far purer taste, than, perhaps, would have suited the preceding and ruder song.

THE WISH.

As sleeps the dreaming Eve below,
Its holiest star keeps ward above,
And yonder wave begins to glow,
Like friendship bright'ning into Love!

Ah, would thy bosom were that stream,
Ne'er wooed save by the virgin air! —
Ah, would that I were that star, whose beam
Looks down and finds its image *there*!

Scarcely was the song ended, before the arrival of Miss Brandon's servant was announced; and her destined escort, starting up, gallantly assisted her with her cloak and her hood, — happy, no doubt, to escape in some measure the overwhelming compliments of his entertainers.

"But," said the doctor, as he shook hands with his deliverer, "by what name shall I remember and" (lifting his reverend eyes) "pray for the gentleman to whom I am so much indebted?"

"You are very kind," said the stranger; "my name is Clifford. Madam," turning to Lucy, "may I offer my hand down the stairs?"

Lucy accepted the courtesy; and the stranger was half-way

down the staircase, when the doctor, stretching out his little neck, exclaimed, —

“Good-evening, sir! I do hope we shall meet again.”

“Fear not!” said Mr. Clifford, laughing gayly; “I am too great a traveller to make that hope a matter of impossibility. Take care, madam, — one step more.”

The night was calm and tolerably clear, though the moon had not yet risen, as Lucy and her companion passed through the fields, with the servant preceding them at a little distance with the lantern.

After a pause of some length, Clifford said, with a little hesitation, “Is Miss Brandon related to the celebrated barrister of her name?”

“He is my uncle,” said Lucy; “do you know him?”

“Only your uncle?” said Clifford, with vivacity, and evading Lucy’s question. “I feared — hem! hem! — that is, I thought he might have been a nearer relation.” There was another, but a shorter pause, when Clifford resumed, in a low voice: “Will Miss Brandon think me very presumptuous if I say that a countenance like hers, once seen, can never be forgotten; and I believe, some years since, I had the honour to see her in London, at the theatre? It was but a momentary and distant glance that I was then enabled to gain; and yet,” he added significantly, “it sufficed!”

“I was only once at the theatre while in London, some years ago,” said Lucy, a little embarrassed; “and indeed an unpleasant occurrence which happened to my uncle, with whom I was, is sufficient to make me remember it.”

“Ha! and what was it?”

“Why, in going out of the play-house his watch was stolen by some dexterous pickpocket.”

“Was the rogue caught?” asked the stranger.

“Yes; and was sent the next day to Bridewell. My uncle said he was extremely young, and yet quite hardened. I remember that I was foolish enough, when I heard of his sentence, to beg very hard that my uncle would intercede for him; but in vain.”

“Did you, indeed, intercede for him?” said the stranger,

in so earnest a tone that Lucy coloured for the twentieth time that night, without seeing any necessity for the blush. Clifford continued, in a gayer tone: "Well, it is surprising how rogues hang together. I should not be greatly surprised if the person who despoiled your uncle were one of the same gang as the rascal who so terrified your worthy friend the doctor. But is this handsome old place your home?"

"This is my home," answered Lucy; "but it is an old-fashioned, strange place; and few people, to whom it was not endeared by associations, would think it handsome."

"Pardon me!" said Lucy's companion, stopping, and surveying with a look of great interest the quaint pile, which now stood close before them; its dark bricks, gable-ends, and ivied walls, tinged by the starry light of the skies, and contrasted by the river, which rolled in silence below. The shutters to the large oriel window of the room in which the squire usually sat were still unclosed, and the steady and warm light of the apartment shone forth, casting a glow even to the smooth waters of the river; at the same moment, too, the friendly bark of the house-dog was heard, as in welcome; and was followed by the note of the great bell, announcing the hour for the last meal of the old-fashioned and hospitable family.

"There is a pleasure in this," said the stranger, unconsciously, and with a half-sigh; "I wish I had a home!"

"And have you not a home?" said Lucy, with *naïveté*.

"As much as a bachelor can have, perhaps," answered Clifford, recovering without an effort his gayety and self-possession. "But you know we wanderers are not allowed the same boast as the more fortunate Benedicts; we send our hearts in search of a home, and we lose the one without gaining the other. But I keep you in the cold, and we are now at your door."

"You will come in, of course!" said Miss Brandon, "and partake of our evening cheer."

The stranger hesitated for an instant, and then said in a quick tone, —

"No! many, many thanks; it is already late. Will Miss Brandon accept my gratitude for her condescension in permit-

ting the attendance of one unknown to her?" As he thus spoke, Clifford bowed profoundly over the hand of his beautiful charge; and Lucy, wishing him good-night, hastened with a light step to her father's side.

Meanwhile Clifford, after lingering a minute, when the door was closed on him, turned abruptly away; and muttering to himself, repaired with rapid steps to whatever object he had then in view.

CHAPTER XII.

UP rouse ye then,

My merry, merry men! — JOANNA BAILLIE.

WHEN the moon rose that night, there was one spot upon which she palely broke, about ten miles distant from Warlock, which the forewarned traveller would not have been eager to pass, but which might not have afforded a bad study to such artists as have caught from the savage painter of the Apennines a love for the wild and the adventurous. Dark trees, scattered far and wide over a broken but verdant sward, made the background; the moon shimmered through the boughs as she came slowly forth from her pavilion of cloud, and poured a broader beam on two figures just advanced beyond the trees. More plainly brought into light by her rays than his companion, here a horseman, clad in a short cloak that barely covered the crupper of his steed, was looking to the priming of a large pistol which he had just taken from his holster. A slouched hat and a mask of black crape conspired with the action to throw a natural suspicion on the intentions of the rider. His horse, a beautiful dark gray, stood quite motionless, with arched neck, and its short ears quickly moving to and fro, demonstrative of that sagacious and anticipative attention which characterizes the noblest of all tamed animals; you would not have perceived the impatience of the steed, but for the white foam that gath-

ered round the bit, and for an occasional and unfrequent toss of the head. Behind this horseman, and partially thrown into the dark shadow of the trees, another man, similarly clad, was busied in tightening the girths of a horse, of great strength and size. As he did so, he hummed, with no unmusical murmur, the air of a popular drinking-song.

"'Sdeath, Ned!" said his comrade, who had for some time been plunged in a silent revery, — "'Sdeath! why can you not stifle your love for the fine arts at a moment like this? That hum of thine grows louder every moment; at last I expect it will burst out into a full roar. Recollect we are not at Gentleman George's now!"

"The more 's the pity, Augustus," answered Ned. "Soho, Little John; woaho, sir! A nice long night like this is made on purpose for drinking. Will you, sir? keep still then!"

"'Man never is, but always to be blest,'" said the moralizing Tomlinson; "you see you sigh for other scenes even when you have a fine night and the chance of a God-send before you."

"Ay, the night is fine enough," said Ned, who was rather a grumbler, as, having finished his groom-like operation, he now slowly mounted. "D— it, Oliver¹ looks out as broadly as if he were going to blab. For my part, I love a *dark* night, with a star here and there winking at us, as much as to say, 'I see you, my boys, but I won't say a word about it,' and a small, pattering, drizzling, mizzling rain, that prevents Little John's hoofs being heard, and covers one's retreat, as it were. Besides, when one is a little wet, it is always necessary to drink the more, to keep the cold from one's stomach when one gets home."

"Or in other words," said Augustus, who loved a maxim from his very heart, "light wet cherishes heavy wet!"

"Good!" said Ned, yawning. "Hang it, I wish the captain would come. Do you know what o'clock it is? Not far short of eleven, I suppose?"

"About that! Hist, is that a carriage? No, it is only a sudden rise in the wind."

¹ The moon.

"Very self-sufficient in Mr. Wind to allow himself to be raised without our help!" said Ned; "by the way, we are of course to go back to the Red Cave?"

"So Captain Lovett says. Tell me, Ned, what do you think of the new tenant Lovett has put into the cave?"

"Oh, I have strange doubts there," answered Ned, shaking the hairy honours of his head. "I don't half like it; consider the cave is our stronghold, and ought only to be known —"

"To men of tried virtue," interrupted Tomlinson. "I agree with you; I must try and get Lovett to discard his singular *protégé*, as the French say."

"'Gad, Augustus, how came you by so much learning? You know all the poets by heart, to say nothing of Latin and French."

"Oh, hang it, I was brought up, like the captain, to a literary way of life."

"That's what makes you so thick with him, I suppose. *He* writes (and sings too) a tolerable song, and is certainly a deuced clever fellow. What a rise in the world he has made! Do you recollect what a poor sort of way he was in when you introduced him at Gentleman George's? and now he's the Captain Crank of the gang."

"The gang! the company, you mean. Gang, indeed! One would think you were speaking of a knot of pickpockets. Yes, Lovett is a clever fellow; and, thanks to me, a very decent philosopher!" It is impossible to convey to our reader the grave air of importance with which Tomlinson made his concluding laudation. "Yes," said he, after a pause, "he has a bold, plain way of viewing things, and, like Voltaire, he becomes a philosopher by being a Man of Sense! Hist! see my horse's ears! Some one is coming, though I don't hear him! Keep watch!"

The robbers grew silent; the sound of distant hoofs was indistinctly heard, and, as it came nearer, there was a crash of boughs, as if a hedge had been ridden through. Presently the moon gleamed picturesquely on the figure of a horseman, approaching through the copse in the rear of the robbers.

Now he was half seen among the sinuosities of his forest path; now in full sight, now altogether hid; then his horse neighed impatiently; now he again came in sight, and in a moment more he had joined the pair! The new-comer was of a tall and sinewy frame, and in the first bloom of manhood. A frock of dark green, edged with a narrow silver lace, and buttoned from the throat to the middle, gave due effect to an upright mien, a broad chest, and a slender but rounded waist, that stood in no need of the compression of the tailor. A short riding-cloak, clasped across the throat with a silver buckle, hung picturesquely over one shoulder, while his lower limbs were cased in military boots, which, though they rose above the knee, were evidently neither heavy nor embarrassing to the vigorous sinews of the horseman. The caparisons of the steed—the bit, the bridle, the saddle, the holster—were according to the most approved fashion of the day; and the steed itself was in the highest condition, and of remarkable beauty. The horseman's air was erect and bold; a small but coal-black mustachio heightened the resolute expression of his short, curved lip; and from beneath the large hat which overhung his brow his long locks escaped, and waved darkly in the keen night air. Altogether, horseman and horse exhibited a gallant and even a chivalrous appearance, which the hour and the scene heightened to a dramatic and romantic effect.

"Ha! Lovett."

"How are you, my merry men?" were the salutations exchanged.

"What news?" said Ned.

"Brave news! look to it. My lord and his carriage will be by in ten minutes at most."

"Have you got anything more out of the parson I frightened so gloriously?" asked Augustus.

"No; more of that hereafter. Now for our new prey."

"Are you sure our noble friend will be so soon at hand?" said Tomlinson, patting his steed, that now pawed in excited hilarity.

"Sure! I saw him change horses; I was in the stable-yard

at the time. He got out for half an hour, to eat, I fancy. Be sure that I played him a trick in the mean while."

"What for?" asked Ned.

"Self and servant."

"The post-boys?"

"Ay, I forgot them. Never mind, you must frighten them."

"Forwards!" cried Ned; and his horse sprang from his armed heel.

"One moment," said Lovett; "I must put on my mask. Soho, Robin, soho! Now for it, — forwards!"

As the trees rapidly disappeared behind them, the riders entered, at a hand gallop, on a broad tract of waste land interspersed with dikes and occasionally fences of hurdles, over which their horses bounded like quadrupeds well accustomed to such exploits.

Certainly at that moment, what with the fresh air, the fitful moonlight now breaking broadly out, now lost in a rolling cloud, the exciting exercise, and that racy and dancing stir of the blood, which all action, whether evil or noble in its nature, raises in our veins; what with all this, we cannot but allow the fascination of that lawless life, — a fascination so great that one of the most noted *gentlemen highwaymen* of the day, one too who had received an excellent education and mixed in no inferior society, is reported to have said, when the rope was about his neck, and the good Ordinary was exhorting him to repent of his ill-spent life, "*Ill-spent, you dog! 'Gad!*" (smacking his lips) "*it was delicious!*"

"Fie! fie! Mr. —, raise your thoughts to Heaven!"

"But a canter across the common — oh!" muttered the criminal; and his soul cantered off to eternity.

So briskly leaped the heart of the leader of the three that, as they now came in view of the main road, and the distant wheel of a carriage *whirred* on the ear, he threw up his right hand with a joyous gesture, and burst into a boyish exclamation of hilarity and delight.

"Whist, captain!" said Ned, checking his own spirits with a mock air of gravity, "let us conduct ourselves like gentle-

men; it is only your low fellows who get into such confoundedly high spirits; men of the world like us should do everything as if their hearts were broken."

"Melancholy¹ ever cronies with Sublimity, and Courage is sublime," said Augustus, with the pomp of a maxim-maker.

¹ A maxim which would have pleased Madame de Staël, who thought that philosophy consisted in fine sentiments. In the "Life of Lord Byron," just published by Mr. Moore, the distinguished biographer makes a similar assertion to that of the sage Augustus: "When did ever a sublime thought spring up in the soul that melancholy was not to be found, however latent, in its neighbourhood?" Now, with due deference to Mr. Moore, this is a very sickly piece of nonsense, that has not even an atom of truth to stand on. "God said, Let there be light, and there was light!" — we should like to know where lies the melancholy of that sublime sentence. "Truth," says Plato, "is the body of God, and light is his shadow." In the name of common-sense, in what possible corner in the vicinity of that lofty image lurks the jaundiced face of this eternal *bête noir* of Mr. Moore's? Again, in that sublimest passage in the sublimest of the Latin poets (Lucretius), which bursts forth in honour of Epicurus,¹ is there anything that speaks to us of sadness? On the contrary, in the three passages we have referred to, especially in the two first quoted, there is something splendidly luminous and cheering. Joy is often a great source of the sublime; the suddenness of its ventings would alone suffice to make it so. What can be more sublime than the triumphant Psalms of David, intoxicated as they are with an almost delirium of transport? Even in the gloomiest passages of the poets, where we recognize sublimity, we do not often find *melancholy*. We are stricken by terror, appalled by awe, but seldom softened into sadness. In fact, melancholy rather belongs to another class of feelings than those excited by a sublime passage or those which engender its composition. On one hand, in the loftiest flights of Homer, Milton, and Shakspeare, we will challenge a critic to discover this "green sickness" which Mr. Moore would convert into the magnificence of the plague. On the other hand, where is the evidence that melancholy made the habitual temperaments of those divine men? Of Homer we know nothing; of Shakspeare and Milton, we have reason to believe the ordinary temperament was constitutionally cheerful. The latter boasts of it. A thousand instances, in contradiction to an assertion it were not worth while to contradict, were it not so generally popular, so highly sanctioned, and so eminently pernicious to everything that is manly and noble in literature, rush to our memory. But we think we have already quoted enough to disprove the sentence, which the illustrious biographer has himself disproved in more than

¹ "Primus Graius homo mortaleis tollere, contra," etc.

To these instances we might especially add the odes of Pindar, Horace, and Campbell.

"Now for the hedge!" cried Lovett, unheeding his comrades; and his horse sprang into the road.

The three men now were drawn up quite still and motionless by the side of the hedge. The broad road lay before them, curving out of sight on either side; the ground was hardening under an early tendency to frost, and the clear ring of approaching hoofs sounded on the ear of the robbers, ominous, haply, of the chinks of "more attractive metal" about, if Hope told no flattering tale, to be their own.

Presently the long-expected vehicle made its appearance at the turn of the road, and it rolled rapidly on behind four fleet post-horses.

"You, Ned, with your large steed, stop the horses; you, Augustus, bully the post-boys; leave me to do the rest," said the captain.

"As agreed," returned Ned, laconically. "Now, look at me!" and the horse of the vain highwayman sprang from its shelter. So instantaneous were the operations of these experienced tacticians, that Lovett's orders were almost executed in a briefer time than it had cost him to give them.

The carriage being stopped, and the post-boys white and trembling, with two pistols (levelled by Augustus and Pepper)

twenty passages, which, *if* he is pleased to forget, we thank Heaven posterity never will. Now we are on the subject of this Life, so excellent in many respects, we cannot but observe that we think the whole scope of its *philosophy* utterly unworthy of the accomplished mind of the writer; the philosophy consists of an unpardonable distorting of general truths, to suit the peculiarities of an individual, noble indeed, but proverbially morbid and eccentric. A striking instance of this occurs in the laboured assertion that poets make but sorry domestic characters. What! because Lord Byron is said to have been a bad husband, was (to go no further back for examples) — was Walter Scott a bad husband, or was Campbell, or is Mr. Moore himself? Why, in the name of justice, should it be insinuated that Milton was a bad husband, when, as far as any one can judge of the matter, it was Mrs. Milton who was the bad wife? And why, oh! why should we be told by Mr. Moore, — a man who, to judge by *Captain Rock* and the *Epicurean*, wants neither learning nor diligence, — why are we to be told, with peculiar emphasis, that Lord Bacon never married, when Lord Bacon not only married, but his marriage was so advantageous as to be an absolute epoch in his career? Really, really, one begins to believe that there is not such a thing as a fact in the world!

cocked at their heads, Lovett, dismounting, threw open the door of the carriage, and in a very civil tone and with a very bland address accosted the inmate.

"Do not be alarmed, my lord, you are perfectly safe; we only require your watch and purse."

"Really," answered a voice still softer than that of the robber, while a marked and somewhat *French* countenance, crowned with a fur cap, peered forth at the arrester, — "really, sir, your request is so modest that I were worse than cruel to refuse you. My purse is not very full, and you may as well have it as one of my rascally duns; but my watch I have a love for, and —"

"I understand you, my lord," interrupted the highwayman. "What do you value your watch at?"

"Humph! to you it may be worth some twenty guineas."

"Allow me to see it!"

"Your curiosity is extremely gratifying," returned the nobleman, as with great reluctance he drew forth a gold repeater, set, as was sometimes the fashion of that day, in precious stones. The highwayman looked slightly at the bauble.

"Your lordship," said he, with great gravity, "was too modest in your calculation; your taste reflects greater credit on you. Allow me to assure you that your watch is worth fifty guineas to us, at the least. To show you that I think so most sincerely, I will either keep it, and we will say no more on the matter; or I will return it to you upon your word of honour that you will give me a check for fifty guineas payable, by your *real* bankers, to 'bearer for self.' Take your choice; it is quite immaterial to me!"

"Upon my honour, sir," said the traveller, with some surprise struggling to his features, "your coolness and self-possession are quite admirable. I see you know the world."

"Your lordship flatters me!" returned Lovett, bowing. "How do you decide?"

"Why, is it possible to write drafts without ink, pen, or paper?"

Lovett drew back, and while he was searching in his pockets for writing implements, which he always carried about him, the traveller seized the opportunity, and suddenly snatching a pistol from the pocket of the carriage, levelled it full at the head of the robber. The traveller was an excellent and practised shot, — he was almost within arm's length of his intended victim, — his pistols were the envy of all his Irish friends. He pulled the trigger, — the powder flashed in the pan; and the highwayman, not even changing countenance, drew forth a small ink-bottle, and placing a steel pen in it, handed it to the nobleman, saying, with incomparable *sang froid*: "Would you like, my lord, to try the other pistol? If so, oblige me by a quick aim, as you must see the necessity of despatch. If not, here is the back of a letter, on which you can write the draft."

The traveller was not a man apt to become embarrassed in anything save his circumstances; but he certainly felt a little discomposed and confused as he took the paper, and uttering some broken words, wrote the check. The highwayman glanced over it, saw it was written according to form, and then with a bow of cool respect, returned the watch, and shut the door of the carriage.

Meanwhile the servant had been shivering in front, boxed up in that solitary convenience termed, not euphoniously, a dickey. Him the robber now briefly accosted.

"What have you got about you belonging to your master?"

"Only his pills, your honour! which I forgot to put in the —"

"Pills! — throw them down to me!" The valet tremblingly extricated from his side-pocket a little box, which he threw down and Lovett caught in his hand.

He opened the box, counted the pills, — "One, two, four, twelve, — aha!" He reopened the carriage door. "Are these your pills, my lord?"

The wondering peer, who had begun to resettle himself in the corner of his carriage, answered that they were.

"My lord, I see you are in a high state of fever; you were a little delirious just now when you snapped a pistol in your

friend's face. Permit me to recommend you a prescription, — swallow off all these pills!”

“My God!” cried the traveller, startled into earnestness; “what do you mean?—twelve of those pills would kill a man!”

“Hear him!” said the robber, appealing to his comrades, who roared with laughter. “What, my lord, would you rebel against your doctor? Fie, fie! be persuaded.”

And with a soothing gesture he stretched the pill-box towards the recoiling nose of the traveller. But though a man who could as well as any one make the best of a bad condition, the traveller was especially careful of his health; and so obstinate was he where that was concerned, that he would rather have submitted to the effectual operation of a bullet than incurred the chance operation of an extra pill. He therefore, with great indignation, as the box was still extended towards him, snatched it from the hand of the robber, and flinging it across the road, said with dignity, —

“Do your worst, rascals! But if you leave me alive, you shall repent the outrage you have offered to one of his Majesty's household!” Then, as if becoming sensible of the ridicule of affecting too much in his present situation, he added in an altered tone: “And now, for Heaven's sake, shut the door; and if you must kill somebody, there's my servant on the box, — he's paid for it.”

This speech made the robbers laugh more than ever; and Lovett, who liked a joke even better than a purse, immediately closed the carriage door, saying, —

“Adieu, my lord; and let me give you a piece of advice: whenever you get out at a country inn, and stay half an hour while your horses are changing, take your pistols with you, or you may chance to have the charge drawn.”

With this admonition the robber withdrew; and seeing that the valet held out to him a long green purse, he said, gently shaking his head, —

“Rogues should not prey on each other, my good fellow. You rob your master; so do we. Let each keep what he has got.”

Long Ned and Tomlinson then backing their horses, the carriage was freed; and away started the post-boys at a pace which seemed to show less regard for life than the robbers themselves had evinced.

Meanwhile the captain remounted his steed, and the three confederates, bounding in gallant style over the hedge through which they had previously gained the road, galloped off in the same direction they had come; the moon ever and anon bringing into light their flying figures, and the sound of many a joyous peal of laughter ringing through the distance along the frosty air.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT is here? —

Gold?

Thus much of this will make black white, foul fair.

Timon of Athens.

Came there a certain lord, neat, trimly drest,
Fresh as a bridegroom.

Henry the Fourth.

I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius! He reads much.
He is a great observer; and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men.
Often he smiles; *but* smiles in such a sort,
As if he mocked himself or scorned his spirit,
That could be moved to smile at anything.

Julius Cæsar.

THE next day, late at noon, as Lucy was sitting with her father, not as usual engaged either in work or in reading, but seemingly quite idle, with her pretty foot upon the squire's gouty stool, and eyes fixed on the carpet, while her hands (never were hands so soft and so small as Lucy's, though they may have been eclipsed in whiteness) were lightly clasped together and reposed listlessly on her knees, — the surgeon of the village abruptly entered with a face full of news and

horror. Old Squire Brandon was one of those persons who always hear news, whatever it may be, later than any of their neighbours; and it was not till all the gossips of the neighbourhood had picked the bone of the matter quite bare, that he was now informed, through the medium of Mr. Pillum, that Lord Mauleverer had on the preceding night been stopped by three highwaymen in his road to his country-seat, and robbed to a considerable amount.

The fame of the worthy Dr. Slopperton's maladventure having long ere this been spread far and wide, the whole neighbourhood was naturally thrown into great consternation. Magistrates were sent to, large dogs borrowed, blunderbusses cleaned, and a subscription made throughout the parish for the raising of a patrol. There seemed little doubt but that the offenders in either case were members of the same horde; and Mr. Pillum, in his own mind, was perfectly convinced that they meant to encroach upon his trade, and destroy all the surrounding householders who were worth the trouble.

The next week passed in the most diligent endeavours, on the part of the neighbouring magistrates and yeomanry, to detect and seize the robbers; but their labours were utterly fruitless; and one justice of peace, who had been particularly active, was himself entirely "cleaned out" by an old gentleman who, under the name of Mr. Bagshot, — rather an ominous cognomen, — offered to conduct the unsuspecting magistrate to the very spot where the miscreants might be seized. No sooner, however, had he drawn the poor justice away from his comrades into a lonely part of the road than he stripped him to his shirt. He did not even leave his worship his flannel drawers, though the weather was as bitter as the dog-days of 1829.

"'Tis not my way," said the hoary ruffian, when the justice petitioned at least for the latter article of attire, — "'tis not my way. I be's slow about my work, but I does it thoroughly; so off with your rags, old un."

This was, however, the only additional instance of aggression in the vicinity of Warlock Manor-house; and by degrees,

as the autumn declined, and no further enormities were perpetrated, people began to look out for a new topic of conversation. This was afforded them by a piece of unexpected good fortune to Lucy Brandon.

Mrs. Warner—an old lady to whom she was slightly related, and with whom she had been residing during her brief and only visit to London—died suddenly, and in her will declared Lucy to be her sole heiress. The property, which was in the Funds, and which amounted to £60,000, was to be enjoyed by Miss Brandon immediately on her attaining her twenty-first year; meanwhile the executors to the will were to pay to the young heiress the annual sum of £600. The joy which this news created in Warlock Manor-house may easily be conceived. The squire projected improvements here, and repairs there; and Lucy, poor girl, who had no idea of money for herself, beyond the purchase of a new pony, or a gown from London, seconded with affectionate pleasure all her father's suggestions, and delighted herself with the reflection that those fine plans, which were to make the Brandons greater than the Brandons ever were before, were to be realized by her own, own money! It was at this identical time that the surrounding gentry made a simultaneous and grand discovery,—namely, of the astonishing merits and great good-sense of Mr. Joseph Brandon. It was a pity, they observed, that he was of so reserved and shy a turn,—it was not becoming in a gentleman of so ancient a family; but why should they not endeavour to draw him from his retirement into those more public scenes which he was doubtless well calculated to adorn?

Accordingly, as soon as the first month of mourning had expired, several coaches, chariots, chaises, and horses which had never been seen at Warlock Manor-house before, arrived there one after the other in the most friendly manner imaginable. Their owners admired everything,—the house was such a fine relic of old times!—for their parts they liked an oak staircase!—and those nice old windows!—and what a beautiful peacock!—and, Heaven save the mark! that magnificent chestnut-tree was worth a forest! Mr. Brandon was

requested to make one of the county hunt, not that he any longer hunted himself, but that his name would give such consequence to the thing! Miss Lucy must come to pass a week with her dear friends the Honourable Misses Sansterre! Augustus, their brother, had *such* a sweet lady's horse! In short, the customary change which takes place in people's characters after the acquisition of a fortune took place in the characters of Mr. and Miss Brandon; and when people become suddenly amiable, it is no wonder that they should suddenly gain a vast accession of friends.

But Lucy, though she had seen so little of the world, was not quite blind; and the squire, though rather obtuse, was not quite a fool. If they were not rude to their new visitors, they were by no means overpowered with gratitude at their condescension. Mr. Brandon declined subscribing to the hunt, and Miss Lucy laughed in the face of the Honourable Augustus Sansterre. Among their new guests, however, was one who to great knowledge of the world joined an extreme and even brilliant polish of manners, which at least prevented deceit from being disagreeable, if not wholly from being unseen: this was the new lieutenant of the county, Lord Mauleverer.

Though possessed of an immense property in that district, Lord Mauleverer had hitherto resided but little on his estates. He was one of those gay lords who are now somewhat uncommon in this country after mature manhood is attained, who live an easy and rakish life, rather among their parasites than their equals, and who yet, by aid of an agreeable manner, natural talents, and a certain graceful and light cultivation of mind (not the less pleasant for its being universally coloured with worldliness, and an amusing rather than offensive regard for self), never lose their legitimate station in society; who are oracles in dress, equipages, cookery, and beauty, and, having no character of their own, are able to fix by a single word a character upon any one else. Thus, while Mauleverer rather lived the dissolute life of a young nobleman, who prefers the company of agreeable demireps to that of wearisome duchesses, than maintained the decorous state befitting a mature age, and an immense interest in the country, he was

quite as popular at court, where he held a situation in the household, as he was in the green-room, where he enchanted every actress on the right side of forty. A word from him in the legitimate quarters of power went further than an harangue from another; and even the prudes — at least, all those who had daughters — confessed that his lordship was a very interesting character. Like Brandon, his familiar friend, he had risen in the world (from the Irish baron to the English earl) without having ever changed his politics, which were ultra-Tory; and we need not observe that he was deemed, like Brandon, a model of public integrity. He was possessed of two places under government, six votes in the House of Commons, and eight livings in the Church; and we must add, in justice to his loyal and religious principles, that there was not in the three kingdoms a firmer friend to the existing establishments.

Whenever a nobleman does not marry, people try to take away his character. Lord Mauleverer had never married. The Whigs had been very bitter on the subject; they even alluded to it in the House of Commons, — that chaste assembly, where the never-failing subject of reproach against Mr. Pitt was the not being of an amorous temperament; but they had not hitherto prevailed against the stout earl's celibacy. It is true that if he was devoid of a wife, he had secured to himself plenty of substitutes; his profession was that of a man of gallantry; and though he avoided the daughters, it was only to make love to the mothers. But his lordship had now attained a certain age, and it was at last circulated among his friends that he intended to look out for a Lady Mauleverer.

"Spare your caresses," said his toady-in-chief to a certain duchess, who had three portionless daughters; "Mauleverer has sworn that he will not choose among your order. You know his high politics, and you will not wonder at his declaring himself averse in matrimony as in morals to a *community of goods*."

The announcement of the earl's matrimonial design and the circulation of this anecdote set all the clergymen's daugh-

ters in England on a blaze of expectation; and when Mauleverer came to —shire, upon obtaining the honour of the lieutenancy, to visit his estates and court the friendship of his neighbours, there was not an old-young lady of forty, who worked in broad-stitch and had never been to London above a week at a time, who did not deem herself exactly the sort of person sure to fascinate his lordship.

It was late in the afternoon when the travelling chariot of this distinguished person, preceded by two outriders, in the earl's undress livery of dark green, stopped at the hall door of Warlock House. The squire was at home, actually and metaphorically; for he never dreamed of denying himself to any one, gentle or simple. The door of the carriage being opened, there descended a small slight man, richly dressed (for lace and silk vestments were not then quite discarded, though gradually growing less the mode), and of an air prepossessing and *distinguished* rather than *dignified*. His years — for his countenance, though handsome, was deeply marked, and evinced the tokens of dissipation — seemed more numerous than they really were; and though not actually past middle age, Lord Mauleverer might fairly have received the unpleasant epithet of elderly. However, his step was firm, his gait upright, and his figure was considerably more youthful than his physiognomy. The first compliments of the day having passed, and Lord Mauleverer having expressed his concern that his long and frequent absence from the county had hitherto prevented his making the acquaintance of Mr. Brandon, the brother of one of his oldest and most esteemed friends, conversation became on both sides rather an effort. Mr. Brandon first introduced the subject of the weather, and the turnips; inquired whether his lordship was not very fond (for his part he used to be, but lately the rheumatism had disabled him; he hoped his lordship was not subject to *that complaint*) of shooting!

Catching only the last words, — for, besides the awful complexity of the squire's sentences, Mauleverer was slightly affected by the aristocratic complaint of deafness, — the earl answered, with a smile, —

"The complaint of shooting! Very good indeed, Mr. Brandon; it is seldom that I have heard so witty a phrase. No, I am not in the least troubled with that epidemic. It is a disorder very prevalent in this county."

"My lord!" said the squire, rather puzzled; and then, observing that Mauleverer did not continue, he thought it expedient to start another subject.

"I was exceedingly grieved to hear that your lordship, in travelling to Mauleverer Park (that is a very ugly road across the waste land; the roads in this country are in general pretty good, — for my own part, when I was a magistrate I was very strict in that respect), was robbed. You have not yet, I believe, detected (for my part, though I do not profess to be much of a politician, I do think that in affairs of robbery there is a great deal of remissness in *the ministers*) *the villains*!"

"Our friend is disaffected!" thought the lord-lieutenant, imagining that the last opprobrious term was applied to the respectable personages specified in the parenthesis. Bowing with a polished smile to the squire, Mauleverer replied aloud, that he was extremely sorry that their conduct (meaning the ministers) did not meet with Mr. Brandon's approbation.

"Well," thought the squire, "that is playing the courtier with a vengeance! — Meet with my approbation!" said he, warmly; "how could your lordship think me (for though I am none of your saints, I am, I hope, a good Christian; an excellent one, judging from your words, *your lordship must be*) *so partial to crime*!"

"I partial to crime!" returned Mauleverer, thinking he had stumbled unawares on some outrageous democrat, yet smiling as softly as usual; "you judge me harshly, Mr. Brandon! You must do me more justice, and you can only do that by knowing me better."

Whatever unlucky answer the squire might otherwise have made was cut off by the entrance of Lucy; and the earl, secretly delighted at the interruption, rose to render her his homage, and to remind her of the introduction he had formerly been so happy as to obtain to her through the friend-

ship of Mr. William Brandon, — a “friendship,” said the gallant nobleman, “to which I have often before been indebted, but which was never more agreeably exerted on my behalf.”

Upon this Lucy, who though she had been so painfully bashful during her meeting with Mr. Clifford, felt no overpowering diffidence in the presence of so much greater a person, replied laughingly, and the earl rejoined by a second compliment. Conversation was now no longer an effort; and Mauleverer, the most consummate of epicures, whom even royalty trembled to ask without preparation, on being invited by the unconscious squire to partake of the family dinner, eagerly accepted the invitation. It was long since the knightly walls of Warlock had been honoured by the presence of a guest so courtly. The good squire heaped his plate with a profusion of boiled beef; and while the poor earl was contemplating in dismay the Alps upon Alps which he was expected to devour, the gray-headed butler, anxious to serve him with alacrity, whipped away the overloaded plate, and presently returned it, yet more astoundingly surcharged with an additional world of a composition of stony colour and sudorific aspect, which, after examining in mute attention for some moments, and carefully removing as well as he was able to the extreme edge of his plate, the earl discovered to be suet pudding.

“You eat nothing, my lord,” cried the squire; “let me give you — this is more underdone;” holding between blade and fork in middle air a horrent fragment of scarlet, shaking its gory locks, — “another slice.”

Swift at the word dropped upon Mauleverer’s plate the harpy finger and ruthless thumb of the gray-headed butler.

“Not a morsel more,” cried the earl, struggling with the murderous domestic. “My dear sir, excuse me; I assure you I have never ate such a dinner before, — never!”

“Nay, now!” quoth the squire, expostulating, “you really (and this air is so keen that your lordship should indulge your appetite, *if you follow the physician’s advice*) eat nothing!”

Again Mauleverer was at fault.

"The physicians are right, Mr. Brandon," said he, "very right, and I am forced to live abstemiously; indeed I do not know whether, if I were to exceed at your hospitable table, and attack all that you would bestow upon me, I should ever recover it. You would have to seek a new lieutenant for your charming county, and on the tomb of the last Mauleverer the hypocritical and unrelated heir would inscribe, 'Died of the visitation of Beef, John, Earl, etc.'"

Plain as the meaning of this speech might have seemed to others, the squire only laughed at the effeminate appetite of the speaker, and inclined to think him an excellent fellow for jesting so good-humouredly on his own physical infirmity. But Lucy had the tact of her sex, and, taking pity on the earl's calamitous situation, though she certainly never guessed at its extent, entered with so much grace and ease into the conversation which he sought to establish between them, that Mauleverer's gentleman, who had hitherto been pushed aside by the zeal of the gray-headed butler, found an opportunity, when the squire was laughing and the butler staring, to steal away the overburdened plate unsuspected and unseen.

In spite, however, of these evils of board and lodgement, Mauleverer was exceedingly well pleased with his visit; nor did he terminate it till the shades of night had begun to close, and the distance from his own residence conspired with experience to remind him that it was possible for a highwayman's audacity to attack the equipage even of Lord Mauleverer. He then reluctantly re-entered his carriage, and, bidding the postilions drive as fast as possible, wrapped himself in his *roque-laire*, and divided his thoughts between Lucy Brandon and the *homard au gratin* with which he proposed to console himself immediately on his return home. However, Fate, which mocks our most cherished hopes, ordained that on arriving at Mauleverer Park the owner should be suddenly afflicted with a loss of appetite, a coldness in the limbs, a pain in the chest, and various other ungracious symptoms of portending malady. Lord Mauleverer went straight to bed; he remained there for some days, and when he recovered his physicians ordered him

to Bath. The Whig Methodists, who hated him, ascribed his illness to Providence; and his lordship was firmly of opinion that it should be ascribed to the beef and pudding. However this be, there was an end, for the present, to the hopes of young ladies of forty, and to the intended festivities at Mauleverer Park.

“Good heavens!” said the earl, as his carriage wheels turned from his gates, “what a loss to country tradesmen may be occasioned by a piece of underdone beef, especially if it be boiled!”

About a fortnight had elapsed since Mauleverer’s meteoric visit to Warlock House, when the squire received from his brother the following epistle:—

MY DEAR JOSEPH, — You know my numerous avocations, and, amid the press of business which surrounds me, will, I am sure, forgive me for being a very negligent and remiss correspondent. Nevertheless, I assure you, no one can more sincerely sympathize in that good fortune which has befallen my charming niece, and of which your last letter informed me, than I do. Pray give my best love to her, and tell her how complacently I look forward to the brilliant sensation she will create, when her beauty is enthroned upon that rank which, I am quite sure, it will one day or other command.

You are not aware, perhaps, my dear Joseph, that I have for some time been in a very weak and declining state of health. The old nervous complaint in my face has of late attacked me grievously, and the anguish is sometimes so great that I am scarcely able to bear it. I believe the great demand which my profession makes upon a frame of body never strong, and now beginning prematurely to feel the infirmities of time, is the real cause of my maladies. At last, however, I must absolutely punish my pocket, and indulge my inclinations by a short respite from toil. The doctors — sworn friends, you know, to the lawyers, since they make common cause against mankind — have peremptorily ordered me to lie by, and to try a short course of air, exercise, social amusements, and the waters of Bath. Fortunately this is vacation time, and I can afford to lose a few weeks of emolument, in order, perhaps, to secure many years of life. I purpose, then, early next week, repairing to that melancholy reservoir of the gay, where persons dance out of life and are fiddled across the Styx. In a word, I shall make one of the adventurers after health who seek the goddess at King Bladud’s pump-room. Will you and dear Lucy join me there? I ask

it of your friendship, and I am quite sure that neither of you will shrink aghast at the proposal of solacing your invalid relation. At the same time that I am recovering health, my pretty niece will be avenging Pluto, by consigning to his dominions many a better and younger hero in my stead. And it will be a double pleasure to me to see all the hearts, etc.— I break off, for what can I say on that subject which the little coquette does not anticipate? It is high time that Lucy should see the world; and though there are many at Bath, above all places, to whom the heiress will be an object of interested attentions, yet there are also many in that crowded city by no means undeserving her notice. What say you, dear Joseph? But I know already: you will not refuse to keep company with me in my little holiday; and Lucy's eyes are already sparkling at the idea of new bonnets, Milsom Street, a thousand adorers, and the pump-room.

Ever, dear Joseph, yours affectionately,

WILLIAM BRANDON.

P. S. I find that my friend Lord Mauleverer is at Bath; I own that is an additional reason to take me thither; by a letter from him, received the other day, I see that he has paid you a visit, and he now raves about his host and the heiress. Ah, Miss Lucy, Miss Lucy! are you going to conquer him whom all London has, for years more than I care to tell (yet not many, for Mauleverer is still young), assailed in vain? Answer me!

This letter created a considerable excitement in Warlock House. The old squire was extremely fond of his brother, and grieved to the heart to find that he spoke so discouragingly of his health. Nor did the squire for a moment hesitate at accepting the proposal to join his distinguished relative at Bath. Lucy also—who had for her uncle, possibly from his profuse yet not indelicate flattery, a very great regard and interest, though she had seen but little of him—urged the squire to lose no time in arranging matters for their departure, so as to precede the barrister, and prepare everything for his arrival. The father and daughter being thus agreed, there was little occasion for delay; an answer to the invalid's letter was sent by return of post, and on the fourth day from their receipt of the said epistle, the good old squire, his daughter, a country girl by way of abigail, the gray-headed butler, and two or three live pets, of the size and habits most

convenient for travelling, were on their way to a city which at that time was gayer at least, if somewhat less splendid, than the metropolis.

On the second day of their arrival at Bath, Brandon (as in future, to avoid confusion, we shall call the younger brother, giving to the elder his patriarchal title of squire) joined them.

He was a man seemingly rather fond of parade, though at heart he disrelished and despised it. He came to their lodging, which had not been selected in the very best part of the town, in a carriage and six, but attended only by one favourite servant.

They found him in better looks and better spirits than they had anticipated. Few persons, when he liked it, could be more agreeable than William Brandon; but at times there mixed with his conversation a bitter sarcasm, probably a habit acquired in his profession, or an occasional tinge of morose and haughty sadness, possibly the consequence of his ill-health. Yet his disorder, which was somewhat approaching to that painful affliction the *tic douloureux*, though of fits more rare in occurrence than those of that complaint ordinarily are, never seemed even for an instant to operate upon his mood, whatever that might be. That disease worked unseen; not a muscle of his face appeared to quiver; the smile never vanished from his mouth, the blandness of his voice never grew faint as with pain, and, in the midst of intense torture, his resolute and stern mind conquered every external indication; nor could the most observant stranger have noted the moment when the fit attacked or released him. There was something inscrutable about the man. You felt that you took his character upon trust, and not on your own knowledge. The acquaintance of years would have left you equally dark as to his vices or his virtues. He varied often, yet in each variation he was equally undiscoverable. Was he performing a series of parts, or was it the ordinary changes of a man's true temperament that you beheld in him? Commonly smooth, quiet, attentive, flattering in social intercourse, he was known in the senate and courts of law for a cold asperity, and a caustic venom, — scarcely rivalled even in those arenas of

contention. It seemed as if the bitterer feelings he checked in private life, he delighted to indulge in public. Yet even there he gave not way to momentary petulance or gushing passion; all seemed with him systematic sarcasm or habitual sternness. He outraged no form of ceremonial or of society. He stung, without appearing conscious of the sting; and his antagonist writhed not more beneath the torture of his satire than the crushing contempt of his self-command. Cool, ready, armed and defended on all points, sound in knowledge, unfailing in observation, equally consummate in sophistry when needed by himself, and instantaneous in detecting sophistry in another; scorning no art, however painful; begrudging no labour, however weighty; minute in detail, yet not the less comprehending the whole subject in a grasp, — such was the legal and public character William Brandon had established, and such was the fame he joined to the unsullied purity of his moral reputation. But to his friends he seemed only the agreeable, clever, lively, and, if we may use the phrase *innocently*, the *worldly* man, — never affecting a superior sanctity, or an over-anxiety to forms, except upon great occasions; and rendering his austerity of manners the more admired, because he made it seem so unaccompanied by hypocrisy.

“Well,” said Brandon, as he sat after dinner alone with his relations, and had seen the eyes of his brother close in diurnal slumber, “tell me, Miss Lucy, what you think of Lord Maul-everer; do you find him agreeable?”

“Very; too much so, indeed!”

“Too much so! That is an uncommon fault, Lucy; unless you mean to insinuate that you find him too agreeable for your peace of mind.”

“Oh, no! there is little fear of that. All that I meant to express was that he seems to make it the sole business of his life to be agreeable, and that one imagines he had gained that end by the loss of certain qualities which one would have liked better.”

“Umph! and what are they?”

“Truth, sincerity, independence, and honesty of mind.”

“My dear Lucy, it has been the professional study of my

life to discover a man's character, especially so far as truth is concerned, in as short a time as possible; but you excel me in intuition, if you can tell whether there be sincerity in a courtier's character at the first interview you have with him."

"Nevertheless, I am sure of my opinion," said Lucy, laughing; "and I will tell you one instance I observed among a hundred. Lord Mauleverer is rather deaf, and he imagined, in conversation, that my father said one thing—it was upon a very trifling subject, the speech of some member of parliament [the lawyer smiled],—when in reality he meant to say another. Lord Mauleverer, in the warmest manner in the world, chimed in with him, appeared thoroughly of his opinion, applauded his sentiments, and wished the whole country of his mind. Suddenly my father spoke; Lord Mauleverer bent down his ear, and found that the sentiments he had so lauded were exactly those my father the least favoured. No sooner did he make this discovery than he wheeled round again,—dexterously and gracefully, I allow; condemned all that he had before extolled, and extolled all that he had before abused!"

"And is that all, Lucy?" said Brandon, with a keener sneer on his lip than the occasion warranted. "Why, that is what every one does; only some more gravely than others. Mauleverer in society, I at the bar, the minister in parliament, friend to friend, lover to mistress, mistress to lover,—half of us are employed in saying white is black, and the other half in swearing that black is white. There is only one difference, my pretty niece, between the clever man and the fool: the fool says what is false while the colours stare in his face and give him the lie; but the clever man takes as it were a brush and literally turns the black into white and the white into black before he makes the assertion, which is *then true*. The fool changes, and is a liar; the clever man makes the colours change, and is a genius. But this is not for your young years yet, Lucy."

"But I can't see the necessity of seeming to agree with people," said Lucy, simply; "surely they would be just as well pleased if you differed from them civilly and with respect?"

"No, Lucy," said Brandon, still sneering; "to be liked, it is not necessary to be anything but compliant. Lie, cheat, make every word a snare, and every act a forgery; but never contradict. Agree with people, and they make a couch for you in their hearts. You know the story of Dante and the buffoon. Both were entertained at the court of the vain pedant, who called himself Prince Scaliger, — the former poorly, the latter sumptuously. 'How comes it,' said the buffoon to the poet, 'that I am so rich and you so poor?' 'I shall be as rich as you,' was the stinging and true reply, 'whenever I can find a patron as like myself as Prince Scaliger is like you!'"

"Yet my birds," said Lucy, caressing the goldfinch, which nestled to her bosom, "are not like me, and I love them. Nay, I often think I could love those better who differ from me the most. I feel it so in books, — when, for instance, I read a novel or a play; and you, uncle, I like almost in proportion to my perceiving in myself nothing in common with you."

"Yes," said Brandon, "you have in common with me a love for old stories of Sir Hugo and Sir Rupert, and all the other 'Sirs' of our mouldered and bygone race. So you shall sing me the ballad about Sir John de Brandon, and the dragon he slew in the Holy Land. We will adjourn to the drawing-room, not to disturb your father."

Lucy agreed, took her uncle's arm, repaired to the drawing-room, and seating herself at the harpsichord, sang to an inspiriting yet somewhat rude air the family ballad her uncle had demanded.

It would have been amusing to note in the rigid face of the hardened and habitual man of peace and parchments a certain enthusiasm which ever and anon crossed his cheek, as the verses of the ballad rested on some allusion to the knightly House of Brandon and its old renown. It was an early prejudice, breaking out despite of himself, — a flash of character, stricken from the hard fossil in which it was imbedded. One would have supposed that the silliest of all prides (for the pride of money, though meaner, is less senseless), family pride, was

the last weakness which at that time the callous and astute lawyer would have confessed, even to himself.

"Lucy," said Brandon, as the song ceased, and he gazed on his beautiful niece with a certain pride in his aspect, "I long to witness your first appearance in the world. This lodging, my dear, is not fit — But pardon me! what I was about to say is this: your father and yourself are here at my invitation, and in my house you must dwell; you are my guests, not mine host and hostess. I have therefore already directed my servant to secure me a house and provide the necessary establishment; and I make no doubt, as he is a quick fellow, that within three days all will be ready. You must then be the magnet of my abode, Lucy; and meanwhile you must explain this to my brother, and — for you know his jealous hospitality — obtain his acquiescence."

"But —" began Lucy.

"But me no buts," said Brandon, quickly, but with an affectionate tone of wilfulness; "and now, as I feel very much fatigued with my journey, you must allow me to seek my own room."

"I will conduct you to it myself," said Lucy, for she was anxious to show her father's brother the care and forethought which she had lavished on her arrangements for his comfort. Brandon followed her into an apartment which his eye knew at a glance had been subjected to that female superintendence which makes such uses from what men reject as insignificant; and he thanked her with more than his usual amenity, for the grace which had presided over, and the kindness which had dictated her preparations. As soon as he was left alone, he wheeled his armchair near the clear, bright fire, and resting his face upon his hand, in the attitude of a man who prepares himself as it were for the indulgence of meditation, he muttered, —

"Yes! these women are, first, what Nature makes them, and that is good; next, what *we* make them, and that is evil! Now, could I persuade myself that we ought to be nice as to the use we put these poor puppets to, I should shrink from enforcing the destiny which I have marked for this girl. But that is a pitiful consideration, and he is but a silly player who

loses his money for the sake of preserving his counters. So the young lady must go as another score to the fortunes of William Brandon. After all, who suffers? Not she. She will have wealth, rank, honour. I shall suffer, to yield so pretty and pure a gem to the coronet of — Faugh! How I despise that dog; but how I could hate, crush, mangle him, could I believe that he despised me! Could he do so? Umph! No, I have resolved myself that is impossible. Well, let me hope *that* matrimonial point will be settled; and now let me consider what next step I shall take for myself, — myself, ay, only myself! With me perishes the last male of Brandon; but the light shall not go out under a bushel.”

As he said this, the soliloquist sunk into a more absorbed and silent revery, from which he was disturbed by the entrance of his servant. Brandon, who was never a dreamer save when alone, broke at once from his reflections.

“You have obeyed my orders, Barlow?” said he.

“Yes, sir,” answered the domestic. “I have taken the best house yet unoccupied; and when Mrs. Roberts [Brandon’s housekeeper] arrives from London, everything will, I trust, be exactly to your wishes.”

“Good! And you gave my note to Lord Mauleverer?”

“With my own hands, sir; his lordship will await you at home all to-morrow.”

“Very well! and now, Barlow, see that your room is within call [bells, though known, were not common at that day], and give out that I am gone to bed, and must not be disturbed. What’s the hour?”

“Just on the stroke of ten, sir.”

“Place on that table my letter-case and the inkstand. Look in, to help me to undress, at half-past one; I shall go to bed at that hour. And — stay — be sure, Barlow, that my brother believes me retired for the night. He does not know my habits, and will vex himself if he thinks I sit up so late in my present state of health.”

Drawing the table with its writing appurtenances near to his master, the servant left Brandon once more to his thoughts or his occupations

CHAPTER XIV.

Servant. Get away, I say, wid dat nasty bell.

Punch. Do you call this a bell? (*patting it.*) It is an organ.

Servant. I say it is a bell, — a nasty bell!

Punch. I say it is an organ (*striking him with it*). What do you say it is now?

Servant. An organ, Mr. Punch!

The Tragical Comedy of Punch and Judy.

THE next morning, before Lucy and her father had left their apartments, Brandon, who was a remarkably early riser, had disturbed the luxurious Mauleverer in his first slumber. Although the courtier possessed a villa some miles from Bath, he preferred a lodging in the town, both as being warmer than a rarely inhabited country-house, and as being to an indolent man more immediately convenient for the gayeties and the waters of the medicinal city. As soon as the earl had rubbed his eyes, stretched himself, and prepared himself for the untimely colloquy, Brandon poured forth his excuses for the hour he had chosen for a visit. "Mention it not, my dear Brandon," said the good-natured nobleman, with a sigh; "I am glad at any hour to see you, and I am very sure that what you have to communicate is always worth listening to."

"It was only upon public business, though of rather a more important description than usual, that I ventured to disturb you," answered Brandon, seating himself on a chair by the bedside. "This morning, an hour ago, I received by private express a letter from London, stating that a new arrangement will positively be made in the Cabinet, — nay, naming the very promotions and changes. I confess that as my name occurred, as also your own, in these nominations, I was anxious to have the benefit of your necessarily accurate knowledge on the subject, as well as of your advice."

"Really, Brandon," said Mauleverer, with a half-peevish smile, "any other hour in the day would have done for 'the business of the nation,' as the newspapers call that troublesome farce we go through; and I had imagined you would not have broken my nightly slumbers except for something of real importance, — the discovery of a new beauty or the invention of a new dish."

"Neither the one nor the other could you have expected from *me*, my dear lord," rejoined Brandon. "You know the dry trifles in which a lawyer's life wastes itself away; and beauties and dishes have no attraction for us, except the former be damsels deserted, and the latter patents invaded. But my news, after all, is worth hearing, unless you have heard it before."

"Not I! but I suppose I shall hear it in the course of the day. Pray Heaven I be not sent for to attend some plague of a council. Begin!"

"In the first place Lord Duberly resolves to resign, unless this negotiation for peace be made a Cabinet question."

"Pshaw! let him resign. I have opposed the peace so long that it is out of the question. Of course, Lord Wansted will not think of it, and he may count on my boroughs. A peace! — shameful, disgraceful, dastardly proposition!"

"But, my dear lord, my letter says that this unexpected firmness on the part of Lord Duberly has produced so great a sensation that, seeing the impossibility of forming a durable Cabinet without him, the king has consented to the negotiation, and Duberly stays in!"

"The devil! — what next?"

"Raffden and Sternhold go out in favour of Baldwin and Charlton, and in the hope that you will lend your aid to —"

"I!" said Lord Mauleverer, very angrily, — "I lend my aid to Baldwin, the Jacobin, and Charlton, the son of a brewer!"

"Very true!" continued Brandon. "But in the hope that you might be persuaded to regard the new arrangements with an indulgent eye, you are talked of instead of the Duke of — for the vacant garter and the office of chamberlain."

"You don't mean it!" cried Mauleverer, starting from his bed.

"A few other (but, I hear, chiefly legal) promotions are to be made. Among the rest, my learned brother, the democrat Sarsden, is to have a silk gown; Cromwell is to be attorney-general; and, between ourselves, they have offered me a judgeship."

"But the garter!" said Mauleverer, scarcely hearing the rest of the lawyer's news, — "the whole object, aim, and ambition of my life. How truly kind in the king! After all," continued the earl, laughing, and throwing himself back, "opinions are variable, truth is not uniform. The times change, not we; and we must have peace instead of war!"

"Your maxims are indisputable, and the conclusion you come to is excellent," said Brandon.

"Why, you and I, my dear fellow," said the earl, "who know men, and who have lived all our lives in the world, *must* laugh behind the scenes at the cant we wrap in tinsel, and send out to stalk across the stage. We know that our Coriolanus of Tory integrity is a corporal kept by a prostitute, and the Brutus of Whig liberty is a lacquey turned out of place for stealing the spoons; but we must not tell this to the world. So, Brandon, you must write me a speech for the next session, and be sure it has plenty of general maxims, and concludes with 'my bleeding country!'"

The lawyer smiled. "You consent then to the expulsion of Sternhold and Raffden? for, after all, that is the question. Our British vessel, as the d—d metaphor-mongers call the State, carries the public good safe in the hold like brandy; and it is only when fear, storm, or the devil makes the rogues quarrel among themselves and break up the casks, that one gets above a thimbleful at a time. We should go on fighting with the rest of the world forever, if the ministers had not taken to fight among themselves."

"As for Sternhold," said the earl, "'t is a vulgar dog, and voted for economical reform. Besides, I don't know him; he may go to the devil, for aught I care; but Raffden must be dealt handsomely with, or, despite the garter, I will fall back among the Whigs, who, after all, give tolerable dinners."

"But why, my lord, must Raffden be treated better than his brother recusant?"

"Because he sent me, in the handsomest manner possible, a pipe of that wonderful Madeira, which you know I consider the chief grace of my cellars, and he gave up a canal navigation bill, which would have enriched his whole county, when he knew that it would injure my property. No, Brandon, curse public cant! we know what that is. But we are gentlemen, and our private friends must not be thrown overboard, — unless, at least, we do it in the civilest manner we can."

"Fear not," said the lawyer; "you have only to say the word, and the Cabinet can cook up an embassy to Owhyhee, and send Raffden there with a stipend of five thousand a year."

"Ah! that's well thought of; or we might give him a grant of a hundred thousand acres in one of the colonies, or let him buy crown land at a discount of eighty per cent. So that's settled."

"And now, my dear friend," said Brandon, "I will tell you frankly why I come so early; I am required to give a hasty answer to the proposal I have received, namely, of the judgeship. Your opinion?"

"A judgeship! *you* a judge? What! forsake your brilliant career for so petty a dignity? You jest!"

"Not at all. Listen. You know how bitterly I have opposed this peace, and what hot enemies I have made among the new friends of the administration. On the one hand, these enemies insist on sacrificing me; and on the other, if I *were* to stay in the Lower House and speak for what I have before opposed, I should forfeit the support of a great portion of my own party. Hated by one body, and mistrusted by the other, a seat in the House of Commons ceases to be an object. It is proposed that I should retire on the dignity of a judge, with the positive and pledged though secret promise of the first vacancy among the chiefs. The place of chief-justice or chief-baron is indeed the only fair remuneration for my surrender of the gains of my profession, and the abandonment of my parliamentary and legal career; the title, which will of course be attached to it, might go (at least, by an exertion

of interest) to the eldest son of my niece,—in case she married a commoner, — or,” added he, after a pause, “her second son in case she married a peer.”

“Ha, true!” said Mauleverer, quickly, and as if struck by some sudden thought; “and your charming niece, Brandon, would be worthy of any honour, either to her children or herself. You do not know how struck I was with her. There is something so graceful in her simplicity; and in her manner of smoothing down the little rugosities of Warlock House there was so genuine and so easy a dignity that I declare I almost thought myself young again, and capable of the self-cheat of believing myself in love. But, oh! Brandon, imagine me at your brother’s board, — me, for whom ortolans are too substantial, and who feel, when I tread, the slightest inequality in the carpets of Tournay, — imagine me, dear Brandon, in a black wainscot room, hung round with your ancestors in brown wigs with posies in their button-hole; an immense fire on one side, and a thorough draught on the other; a huge circle of beef before me, smoking like Vesuvius, and twice as large; a plateful (the plate was pewter, — is there not a metal so called?) of this mingled flame and lava sent under my very nostril, and upon pain of ill-breeding to be despatched down my proper mouth; an old gentleman in fustian breeches and worsted stockings, by way of a butler, filling me a can of ale, and your worthy brother asking me if I would not prefer port; a lean footman in livery, — such a livery, ye gods! — scarlet, blue, yellow, and green, a rainbow ill made! — on the opposite side of the table, looking at the ‘ Lord ’ with eyes and mouth equally open, and large enough to swallow me; and your excellent brother himself at the head of the table glowing through the mists of the beef, like the rising sun in a sign-post; and then, Brandon, turning from this image, behold beside me the fair, delicate, aristocratic, yet simple loveliness of your niece, and — But you look angry; I have offended you?”

It was high time for Mauleverer to ask that question, for during the whole of the earl’s recital the dark face of his companion had literally burned with rage; and here we may

observe how generally selfishness, which *makes* the man of the world, *prevents* its possessor, by a sort of paradox, from being *consummately* so. For Mauleverer, occupied by the pleasure he felt at his own wit, and never having that magic sympathy with others which creates the incessantly keen observer, had not for a moment thought that he was offending to the quick the hidden pride of the lawyer. Nay, so little did he suspect Brandon's real weaknesses that he thought him a philosopher who would have laughed alike at principles and people, however near to him might be the latter, and however important the former. Mastering by a single effort, which restored his cheek to its usual steady hue, the outward signs of his displeasure, Brandon rejoined, —

"Offend me! By no means, my dear lord. I do not wonder at your painful situation in an old country-gentleman's house, which has not for centuries offered scenes fit for the presence of so distinguished a guest,— never, I may say, since the time when Sir Charles de Brandon entertained Elizabeth at Warlock, and your ancestor (you know my old musty studies on those points of obscure antiquity), John Mauleverer, who was a noted goldsmith of London, supplied the plate for the occasion."

"Fairly retorted," said Mauleverer, smiling; for though the earl had a great contempt for low birth set on high places in other men, he was utterly void of pride in his own family, — "fairly retorted! But I never meant anything else but a laugh at your brother's housekeeping, — a joke surely permitted to a man whose own fastidiousness on these matters is so standing a jest. But, by heavens, Brandon! to turn from these subjects, your niece is the prettiest girl I have seen for twenty years; and if she would forget my being the descendant of John Mauleverer, the noted goldsmith of London, she may be Lady Mauleverer as soon as she pleases."

"Nay, now, let us be serious, and talk of the judgeship," said Brandon, affecting to treat the proposal as a joke.

"By the soul of Sir Charles de Brandon, I am serious!" cried the earl; "and as a proof of it, I hope you will let me pay my respects to your niece to-day, — not with my offer in

my hand yet, for it must be a love match on *both* sides." And the earl, glancing towards an opposite glass, which reflected his attenuated but comely features beneath his velvet night-cap trimmed with Mechlin, laughed half-triumphantly as he spoke.

A sneer just passed the lips of Brandon, and as instantly vanished, while Mauleverer continued, —

"And as for the judgeship, dear Brandon, I advise you to accept it, though you know best; and I do think no man will stand a fairer chance of the chief-justiceship, — or, though it be somewhat unusual for 'common' lawyers, why not the woolsack itself? As you say, the second son of your niece might inherit the dignity of a peerage!"

"Well, I will consider of it favourably," said Brandon; and soon afterwards he left the nobleman to renew his broken repose.

"I can't laugh at that man," said Mauleverer to himself, as he turned round in his bed, "though he has much that I should laugh at in another; and, faith, there is one little matter I might well scorn him for, if I were not a philosopher. 'Tis a pretty girl, his niece, and with proper instructions might do one credit; besides, she has £60,000 ready money; and, faith, I have not a shilling for my own pleasure, though I have — or alas! had — fifty thousand a year for that of my establishment! In all probability she will be the lawyer's heiress, and he must have made at least as much again as her portion; nor is *he*, poor devil, a very good life. Moreover, if he rise to the peerage? and the second son — Well! well! it will not be such a bad match for the goldsmith's descendant either!"

With that thought, Lord Mauleverer fell asleep. He rose about noon, dressed himself with unusual pains, and was just going forth on a visit to Miss Brandon, when he suddenly remembered that her uncle had not mentioned her address or his own. He referred to the lawyer's note of the preceding evening; no direction was inscribed on it; and Mauleverer was forced, with much chagrin, to forego for that day the pleasure he had promised himself.

In truth, the wary lawyer, who, as we have said, despised

show and outward appearances as much as any man, was yet sensible of their effect even in the eyes of a lover; and moreover, Lord Mauleverer was one whose habits of life were calculated to arouse a certain degree of vigilance on points of household pomp even in the most unobservant. Brandon therefore resolved that Lucy should not be visited by her admirer till the removal to their new abode was effected; nor was it till the third day from that on which Mauleverer had held with Brandon the interview we have recorded, that the earl received a note from Brandon, seemingly turning only on political matters, but inscribed with the address and direction in full form.

Mauleverer answered it in person. He found Lucy at home, and more beautiful than ever; and from that day his mind was made up, as the mammas say, and his visits became constant.



CHAPTER XV.

THERE is a festival where knights and dames,
And aught that wealth or lofty lineage claims,
Appear.

.

'T is he, — how came he thence? What doth he here?

Lara.

THERE are two charming situations in life for a woman, — one, the first freshness of heiress-ship and beauty; the other, youthful widowhood, with a large jointure. It was at least Lucy's fortune to enjoy the first. No sooner was she fairly launched into the gay world than she became the object of universal idolatry. Crowds followed her wherever she moved: nothing was talked of or dreamed of, toasted or betted on, but Lucy Brandon; even her simplicity, and utter ignorance of the arts of fine life, enhanced the *éclat* of her reputation. Somehow or other, *young* people of the gentler sex are rarely ill-bred, even in their eccentricities; and there is often a great

deal of grace in inexperience. Her uncle, who accompanied her everywhere, himself no slight magnet of attraction, viewed her success with a complacent triumph which he suffered no one but her father or herself to detect. To the smooth coolness of his manner, nothing would have seemed more foreign than pride at the notice gained by a beauty, or exultation at any favour won from the caprices of fashion. As for the good old squire, one would have imagined him far more the invalid than his brother. He was scarcely ever seen; for though he went everywhere, he was one of those persons who sink into a corner the moment they enter a room. Whoever discovered him in his retreat, held out their hands, and exclaimed, "God bless me! *you* here! We have not seen you for this age!" Now and then, if in a very dark niche of the room a card-table had been placed, the worthy gentleman toiled through an obscure rubber; but more frequently he sat with his hands clasped and his mouth open, counting the number of candles in the room, or calculating "when that stupid music would be over."

Lord Mauleverer, though a polished and courteous man, whose great object was necessarily to ingratiate himself with the father of his intended bride, had a horror of being bored, which surpassed all other feelings in his mind. He could not therefore persuade himself to submit to the melancholy duty of listening to the squire's "linked *speeches* long drawn out." He always glided by the honest man's station, seemingly in an exceeding hurry, with a "Ah, my *dear* sir, how do you do? How delighted I am to see you! And your incomparable daughter? Oh, there she is! Pardon me, dear sir, — you see my attraction."

Lucy, indeed, who never forgot any one (except herself occasionally), sought her father's retreat as often as she was able; but her engagements were so incessant that she no sooner lost one partner than she was claimed and carried off by another. However, the squire bore his solitude with tolerable cheerfulness, and always declared that "he was very well amused; although balls and concerts were necessarily a little dull to one who came from a fine old place like Warlock

Manor-house, and it was not the same thing that pleased young ladies (for, to them, that fiddling and giggling till two o'clock in the morning might be *a very pretty way of killing time*) and *their papas!*"

What considerably added to Lucy's celebrity was the marked notice and admiration of a man so high in rank and *ton* as Lord Mauleverer. That personage, who still retained much of a youthful mind and temper, and who was in his nature more careless than haughty, preserved little or no state in his intercourse with the social revellers at Bath. He cared not whither he went, so that he was in the train of the young beauty; and the most fastidious nobleman of the English court was seen in every second and third rate set of a great watering-place, — the attendant, the flirt, and often the ridicule of the daughter of an obscure and almost insignificant country squire. Despite the honour of so distinguished a lover, and despite all the novelties of her situation, the pretty head of Lucy Brandon was as yet, however, perfectly unturned; and as for her heart, the only impression that it had ever received was made by that wandering guest of the village rector, whom she had never again seen, but who yet clung to her imagination, invested not only with all the graces which in right of a singularly handsome person he possessed, but with those to which he never could advance a claim, — more dangerous to her peace, for the very circumstance of their origin in her fancy, not his merits.

They had now been some little time at Bath, and Brandon's brief respite was pretty nearly expired, when a public ball of uncommon and manifold attraction was announced. It was to be graced not only by the presence of all the surrounding families, but also by that of royalty itself; it being an acknowledged fact that people dance much better and eat much more supper when any relation to a king is present.

"I must stay for this ball, Lucy," said Brandon, who, after spending the day with Lord Mauleverer, returned home in a mood more than usually cheerful, — "I must stay for this one ball, Lucy, and witness your complete triumph, even though it will be necessary to leave you the very next morning."

"So soon!" cried Lucy.

"So soon!" echoed the uncle, with a smile. "How good you are to speak thus to an old valetudinarian, whose company must have fatigued you to death! Nay, no pretty denials! But the great object of my visit to this place is accomplished: I have seen you, I have witnessed your *début* in the great world, with, I may say, more than a father's exultation, and I go back to my dry pursuits with the satisfaction of thinking our old and withered genealogical tree has put forth one blossom worthy of its freshest day."

"Uncle!" said Lucy, reprovingly, and holding up her taper finger with an arch smile, mingling with a blush, in which the woman's vanity spoke, unknown to herself.

"And why that look, Lucy?" said Brandon.

"Because — because — well, no matter! you have been bred to that trade in which, as you say yourself, men tell untruths for others till they lose all truth for themselves. But let us talk of you, not me; are you really well enough to leave us?"

Simple and even cool as the words of Lucy's question, when written, appear, in her mouth they took so tender, so anxious a tone, that Brandon, who had no friend nor wife nor child, nor any one in his household in whom interest in his health or welfare was a thing of course, and who was consequently wholly unaccustomed to the accent of kindness, felt himself of a sudden touched and stricken.

"Why, indeed, Lucy," said he, in a less artificial voice than that in which he usually spoke, "I should like still to profit by your cares, and forget my infirmities and pains in your society; but I cannot: the tide of events, like that of nature, waits not our pleasure!"

"But we may take our own time for setting sail!" said Lucy.

"Ay, this comes of talking in metaphor," rejoined Brandon, smiling; "they who begin it always get the worst of it. In plain words, dear Lucy, I can give no more time to my own ailments. A lawyer cannot play truant in term-time without —"

"Losing a few guineas!" said Lucy, interrupting him.

"Worse than that, — his practice and his name."

"Better those than health and peace of mind."

"Out on you, no!" said Brandon, quickly, and almost fiercely. "We waste all the greenness and pith of our life in striving to gain a distinguished slavery; and when it is gained, we must not think that an humble independence would have been better. If we ever admit that thought, what fools, what lavish fools, we have been! No!" continued Brandon, after a momentary pause, and in a tone milder and gayer, though not less characteristic of the man's stubbornness of will, "after losing all youth's enjoyments and manhood's leisure, in order that in age the mind, the all-conquering mind, should break its way at last into the applauding opinions of men, I should be an effeminate idler indeed, did I suffer, so long as its jarring parts hold together, or so long as I have the power to command its members, this weak body to frustrate the labour of its better and nobler portion, and command that which it is ordained to serve."

Lucy knew not while she listened, half in fear, half in admiration, to her singular relation, that at the very moment he thus spoke, his disease was preying upon him in one of its most relentless moods, without the power of wringing from him a single outward token of his torture. But she wanted nothing to increase her pity and affection for a man who in consequence, perhaps, of his ordinary surface of worldly and cold properties of temperament never failed to leave an indelible impression on all who had ever seen that temperament broken through by deeper though often by more evil feelings.

"Shall you go to Lady ——'s rout?" asked Brandon, easily sliding back into common topics. "Lord Mauleverer requested me to ask you."

"That depends on you and my father."

"If on me, I answer yes," said Brandon. "I like hearing Mauleverer, especially among persons who do not understand him. There is a refined and subtle sarcasm running through the commonplaces of his conversation, which cuts the good fools, like the invisible sword in the fable, that lopped off heads without occasioning the owners any other sensation

than a pleasing and self-complacent titillation. How immeasurably superior he is in manner and address to all we meet here! Does it not strike you?"

"Yes — no — I can't say that it does exactly," rejoined Lucy.

"Is that confusion tender?" thought Brandon.

"In a word," continued Lucy, "Lord Mauleverer is one whom I think pleasing without fascination, and amusing without brilliancy. He is evidently accomplished in mind and graceful in manner, and withal the most uninteresting person I ever met."

"Women have not often thought so," said Brandon.

"I cannot believe that they can think otherwise."

A certain expression, partaking of scorn, played over Brandon's hard features. It was a noticeable trait in him, that while he was most anxious to impress Lucy with a favourable opinion of Lord Mauleverer, he was never quite able to mask a certain satisfaction at any jest at the earl's expense, or any opinion derogatory to his general character for pleasing the opposite sex; and this satisfaction was no sooner conceived than it was immediately combated by the vexation he felt that Lucy did not seem to share his own desire that she should become the wife of the courtier. There appeared as if in that respect there was a contest in his mind between interest on one hand and private dislike or contempt on the other.

"You judge women wrongly!" said Brandon. "Ladies never know each other; of all persons, Mauleverer is best calculated to win them, and experience has proved my assertion. The proudest lot I know for a woman would be the thorough conquest of Lord Mauleverer; but it is impossible. He may be gallant, but he will never be subdued. He defies the whole female world, and with justice and impunity. Enough of him. Sing to me, dear Lucy."

The time for the ball approached; and Lucy, who was a charming girl and had nothing of the angel about her, was sufficiently fond of gayety, dancing, music, and admiration to feel her heart beat high at the expectation of the event.

At last the day itself came. Brandon dined alone with Mauleverer, having made the arrangement that he, with the earl, was to join his brother and niece at the ball. Mauleverer, who hated state, except on great occasions, when no man displayed it with a better grace, never suffered his servants to wait at dinner when he was alone or with one of his peculiar friends. The attendants remained without, and were summoned at will by a bell laid beside the host.

The conversation was unrestrained.

"I am perfectly certain, Brandon," said Mauleverer, "that if you were to live tolerably well, you would soon get the better of your nervous complaints. It is all poverty of blood, believe me. Some more of the fins, eh?—No! Oh, hang your abstemiousness; it is d—d unfriendly to eat so little! Talking of fins and friends, Heaven defend me from ever again forming an intimacy with a pedantic epicure, especially if he puns!"

"Why, what has a pedant to do with fins?"

"I will tell you, — ah, this madeira! — I suggested to Lord Dareville, who affects the gourmand, what a capital thing a dish all fins (turbot's fins) might be made. 'Capital!' said he, in a rapture; 'dine on it with me to-morrow.' '*Volontiers!*' said I. The next day, after indulging in a pleasing revery all the morning as to the manner in which Dareville's cook, who is not without genius, would accomplish the grand idea, I betook myself punctually to my engagement. Would you believe it? When the cover was removed, the sacrilegious dog of an Amphytrion had put into the dish Cicero's 'De Finibus.' 'There is a work all fins!' said he.

"Atrocious jest!" exclaimed Brandon, solemnly.

"Was it not? Whenever the gastronomists set up a religious inquisition, I trust they will roast every impious rascal who treats the divine mystery with levity. Pun upon cooking, indeed! *A propos* of Dareville, he is to come into the administration."

"You astonish me!" said Brandon. "I never heard that; I don't know him. He has very little power; has he any talent?"

"Yes, a very great one, — *acquired*, though."

"What is it?"

"A pretty wife!"

"My lord!" exclaimed Brandon, abruptly, and half rising from his seat.

Mauleverer looked up hastily, and on seeing the expression of his companion's face coloured deeply; there was a silence for some moments.

"Tell me," said Brandon, indifferently, helping himself to vegetables, for he seldom touched meat; and a more amusing contrast can scarcely be conceived than that between the earnest epicurism of Mauleverer and the careless contempt of the sublime art manifested by his guest, — "tell me, you who necessarily know everything, whether the government really is settled, — whether you are to have the garter, and I (mark the difference!) the judgeship."

"Why so, I imagine, it will be arranged; namely, if you will consent to hang up the rogues instead of living by the fools!"

"One may unite both!" returned Brandon. "But I believe, in general, it is *vice versa*; for we live by the rogues, and it is only the fools we are able to hang up. You ask me if I will take the judgeship. I would not — no, I would rather cut my hand off," and the lawyer spoke with great bitterness, "forsake my present career, despite all the obstacles that now encumber it, did I think that this miserable body would suffer me for two years longer to pursue it."

"You shock me!" said Mauleverer, a little affected, but nevertheless applying the cayenne to his cucumber with his usual unerring nicety of tact, — "you shock me; but you are considerably better than you were."

"It is not," continued Brandon, who was rather speaking to himself than to *his friend*, — "it is not that I am unable to conquer the pain and to master the recreant nerves; but I feel myself growing weaker and weaker beneath the continual exertion of my remaining powers, and I shall die before I have gained half my objects, if I do not leave the labours which are literally tearing me to pieces."

"But," said Lord Mauleverer, who was the idlest of men, "the judgeship is not an easy sinecure."

"No; but there is less demand on the mind in that station than in my present one;" and Brandon paused before he continued. "Candidly, Mauleverer, you do not think they will deceive me, — you do not think they mean to leave me to this political death without writing 'Resurgam' over the hatchment?"

"They dare not!" said Mauleverer, quaffing his fourth glass of madeira.

"Well, I have decided on my change of life," said the lawyer, with a slight sigh.

"So have I on my change of opinion," chimed in the earl. "I will tell you what opinions seem to me like."

"What?" said Brandon, abstractedly.

"*Trees!*" answered Mauleverer, quaintly. "If they can be made serviceable by standing, don't part with a stick; but when they are of that growth that sells well, or whenever they shut out a *fine prospect*, cut them down, and pack them off by all manner of means! — And now for the second course."

"I wonder," said the earl, when our political worthies were again alone, "whether there ever existed a minister who cared three straws for the people; *many* care for *their party*, but as for the country —"

"It is all fiddlestick!" added the lawyer, with more significance than grace.

"Right; it is all fiddlestick, as you tersely express it. King, Constitution, and Church, forever! which, being interpreted, means, first, King or Crown influence, judgeships, and garters; secondly, Constitution, or fees to the lawyer, places to the statesman, laws for the rich, and Game Laws for the poor; thirdly, Church, or livings for our younger sons, and starvings for their curates!"

"Ha, ha!" said Brandon, laughing sardonically; "*we* know human nature!"

"And how it may be gulled!" quoth the courtier. "Here's a health to your niece; and may it not be long before you hail her as your friend's bride!"

"Bride, *et cetera*," said Brandon, with a sneer meant only for his own satisfaction. "But mark me, my dear lord, do not be too sure of her. She is a singular girl, and of more independence than the generality of women. She will not think of your rank and station in estimating you; she will think only of their owner; and pardon me if I suggest to you, who know the sex so well, one plan that it may not be unadvisable for you to pursue. Don't let her fancy you entirely hers; rouse her jealousy, pique her pride, let her think you unconquerable, and unless she is unlike all women, she will want to conquer you."

The earl smiled. "I must take my chance!" said he, with a confident tone.

"The hoary coxcomb!" muttered Brandon, between his teeth; "now will his folly spoil all."

"And that reminds me," continued Mauleverer, "that time wanes, and dinner is not over; let us not hurry, but let us be silent, to enjoy the more. These truffles in champagne, — *do* taste them; they would raise the dead."

The lawyer smiled, and accepted the kindness, though he left the delicacy untouched; and Mauleverer, whose soul was in his plate, saw not the heartless rejection.

Meanwhile the youthful beauty had already entered the theatre of pleasure, and was now seated with the squire at the upper end of the half-filled ball-room.

A gay lady of the fashion at that time, and of that half and half rank to which belonged the aristocracy of Bath, — one of those curious persons we meet with in the admirable novels of Miss Burney, as appertaining to the order of fine ladies, — made the trio with our heiress and her father, and pointed out to them by name the various characters that entered the apartments. She was still in the full tide of scandal, when an unusual sensation was visible in the environs of the door; three strangers of marked mien, gay dress, and an air which, though differing in each, was in all alike remarkable for a sort of "dashing" assurance, made their *entrée*. One was of uncommon height, and possessed of an exceedingly fine head of hair; another was of a more quiet and unpretending aspect,

but nevertheless he wore upon his face a supercilious yet not ill-humoured expression; the third was many years younger than his companions, strikingly handsome in face and figure, altogether of a better taste in dress, and possessing a manner that, though it had equal ease, was not equally noticeable for impudence and swagger.

"Who can those be?" said Lucy's female friend, in a wondering tone. "I never saw them before, — they must be great people, — they have all *the airs of persons of quality!* Dear, how odd that I should not know them!"

While the good lady, who, like all good ladies of that stamp, thought people of quality had airs, was thus lamenting her ignorance of the new-comers, a general whisper of a similar import was already circulating round the room, "Who are they?" and the universal answer was, "Can't tell, — never saw them before!"

Our strangers seemed by no means displeased with the evident and immediate impression they had made. They stood in the most conspicuous part of the room, enjoying among themselves a low conversation, frequently broken by fits of laughter, — tokens, we need not add, of their supereminently good breeding. The handsome figure of the youngest stranger, and the simple and seemingly unconscious grace of his attitudes were not, however, unworthy of the admiration he excited; and even his laughter, rude as it really was, displayed so dazzling a set of teeth, and was accompanied by such brilliant eyes, that before he had been ten minutes in the room there was scarcely a young lady under thirty-nine not disposed to fall in love with him.

Apparently heedless of the various remarks which reached their ears, our strangers, after they had from their station sufficiently surveyed the beauties of the ball, strolled arm-in-arm through the rooms. Having sauntered through the ball and card rooms, they passed the door that led to the entrance passage, and gazed, with other loiterers, upon the new-comers ascending the stairs. Here the two younger strangers renewed their whispered conversation, while the eldest, who was also the tallest one, carelessly leaning against the wall, employed

himself for a few moments in thrusting his fingers through his hair. In finishing this occupation, the peculiar state of his ruffles forced itself upon the observation of our gentleman, who, after gazing for some moments on an envious rent in the right ruffle, muttered some indistinct words, like "the cock of that confounded pistol," and then tucked up the mutilated ornament with a peculiarly nimble motion of the fingers of his left hand; the next moment, diverted by a new care, the stranger applied his digital members to the arranging and caressing of a remarkably splendid brooch, set in the bosom of a shirt the rude texture of which formed a singular contrast with the magnificence of the embellishment and the fineness of the one ruffle suffered by our modern Hyperion to make its appearance beneath his cinnamon-coloured coat-sleeve. These little personal arrangements completed, and a dazzling snuff-box released from the confinement of a side-pocket, tapped thrice, and lightened of two pinches of its titillating luxury, the stranger now, with the guardian eye of friendship, directed a searching glance to the dress of his friends. *There* all appeared meet for his strictest scrutiny, save, indeed, that the supercilious-looking stranger having just drawn forth his gloves, the lining of his coat-pocket—which was rather soiled into the bargain—had not returned to its internal station; the tall stranger, seeing this little inelegance, kindly thrust three fingers with a sudden and light dive into his friend's pocket, and effectually repulsed the forwardness of the intrusive lining. The supercilious stranger no sooner felt the touch than he started back, and whispered to his officious companion, —

"What! among friends, Ned! Fie now; curb the nature of thee for one night at least."

Before he of the flowing locks had time to answer, the master of the ceremonies, who had for the last three minutes been eying the strangers through his glass, stepped forward with a sliding bow; and the handsome gentleman, taking upon himself the superiority and precedence over his comrades, was the first to return the courtesy. He did this with so good a grace and so pleasing an expression of countenance that the

censor of bows was charmed at once, and with a second and more profound salutation announced himself and his office.

"You would like to dance probably, gentlemen?" he asked, glancing at each, but directing his words to the one who had prepossessed him.

"You are very good," said the comely stranger; "and, for my part, I shall be extremely indebted to you for the exercise of your powers in my behalf. Allow me to return with you to the ball-room, and I can there point out to you the objects of my especial admiration."

The master of the ceremonies bowed as before, and he and his new acquaintance strolled into the ball-room, followed by the two comrades of the latter.

"Have you been long in Bath, sir?" inquired the monarch of the rooms.

"No, indeed! we only arrived this evening."

"From London?"

"No; we made a little tour across the country."

"Ah! very pleasant, this fine weather."

"Yes; especially in the evenings."

"Oho! romantic!" thought the man of balls, as he rejoined aloud, "Why, the nights *are* agreeable, and the moon is particularly favourable to us."

"Not always!" quoth the stranger.

"True, true, the night before last was dark; but, in general, surely the moon has been very bright."

The stranger was about to answer, but checked himself, and simply bowed his head as in assent.

"I wonder who they are!" thought the master of the ceremonies. "Pray, sir," said he, in a low tone, "is that gentleman, that *tall* gentleman, any way related to Lord ——? I cannot but think I see a family likeness."

"Not in the least related to his lordship," answered the stranger; "but he is of a family that have made a noise in the world; though he, as well as my other friend, is merely a commoner!" laying a stress on the last word.

"Nothing, sir, can be more respectable than a commoner of family," returned the polite Mr. ——, with a bow.

"I agree with you, sir," answered the stranger, with another. "But, heavens!"—and the stranger started; for at that moment his eye caught for the first time, at the far end of the room, the youthful and brilliant countenance of Lucy Brandon, — "do I see rightly, or is that Miss Brandon?"

"It is indeed that lovely young lady," said Mr. —. "I congratulate you on knowing one so admired. I suppose that you, being blessed with her acquaintance, do not need the formality of my introduction?"

"Umph!" said the stranger, rather shortly and uncourtously. "No! Perhaps you had better present me!"

"By what name shall I have that honour, sir?" discreetly inquired the nomenclator.

"Clifford!" answered the stranger; "Captain Clifford!"

Upon this the prim master of the ceremonies, threading his path through the now fast-filling room, approached towards Lucy to obey Mr. Clifford's request. Meanwhile that gentleman, before he followed the steps of the tutelary spirit of the place, paused and said to his friends, in a tone careless yet not without command, "Hark ye, gentlemen; oblige me by being as civil and silent as ye are able; and don't thrust yourselves upon me, as you are accustomed to do, whenever you see *no* opportunity of indulging me with that honour with the least show of propriety!" So saying, and waiting no reply, Mr. Clifford hastened after the master of the ceremonies.

"Our friend grows mighty imperious!" said Long Ned, whom our readers have already recognized in the tall stranger.

"'Tis the way with your rising geniuses," answered the moralizing Augustus Tomlinson. "Suppose we go to the card-room and get up a rubber!"

"Well thought of," said Ned, yawning, — a thing he was very apt to do in society; "and I wish nothing worse to those who try our *rubbers* than that they may be well cleaned by them." Upon this witticism the Colossus of Roads, glancing towards the glass, strutted off, arm-in-arm with his companion, to the card-room.

During this short conversation the re-introduction of Mr. Clifford (the stranger of the Rectory and deliverer of Dr.

Slopperton) to Lucy Brandon had been effected, and the hand of the heiress was already engaged, according to the custom of that time, for the *two* ensuing dances.

It was about twenty minutes after the above presentation had taken place that Lord Mauleverer and William Brandon entered the rooms; and the buzz created by the appearance of the noted peer and the distinguished lawyer had scarcely subsided, before the royal personage expected to grace the "festive scene" (as the newspapers say of a great room with plenty of miserable-looking people in it) arrived. The most attractive persons in Europe may be found among the royal family of England, and the great personage then at Bath, in consequence of certain political intrigues, wished, at that time especially, to make himself as popular as possible. Having gone the round of the old ladies, and assured them, as the "Court Journal" assures the old ladies at this day, that they were "morning stars" and "swan-like wonders," the prince espied Brandon, and immediately beckoned to him with a familiar gesture. The smooth but saturnine lawyer approached the royal presence with the manner that peculiarly distinguished him, and which blended in no ungraceful mixture a species of stiffness that passed with the crowd for native independence, with a supple insinuation that was usually deemed the token of latent benevolence of heart. There was something, indeed, in Brandon's address that always pleased the great; and they liked him the better because, though he stood on no idle political points, mere differences in the view taken of a hairbreadth, — such as a corn-law or a Catholic bill, alteration in the Church or a reform in parliament, — yet he invariably talked so like a man of honour (except when with Mauleverer) that his urbanity seemed attachment to individuals, and his concessions to power sacrifices of private opinion for the sake of obliging his friends.

"I am very glad indeed," said the royal personage, "to see Mr. Brandon looking so much better. Never was the crown in greater want of his services; and if rumour speak true, they will soon be required in another department of his profession."

Brandon bowed, and answered, —

“So please your royal highness, they will always be at the command of a king from whom I have experienced such kindness, in any capacity for which his Majesty may deem them fitting.”

“It is true, then!” said his royal highness, significantly. “I congratulate you! The quiet dignity of the bench must seem to you a great change after a career so busy and restless.”

“I fear I shall feel it so at first, your royal highness,” answered Brandon, “for I like even the toil of my profession; and at this moment, when I am in full practice, it more than ever — But” (checking himself at once) “his Majesty’s wishes, and my satisfaction in complying with them, are more than sufficient to remove any momentary regret I might otherwise have felt in quitting those toils which have now become to me a second nature.”

“It is possible,” rejoined the prince, “that his Majesty took into consideration the delicate state of health which, in common with the whole public, I grieve to see the papers have attributed to one of the most distinguished ornaments of the bar.”

“So please your royal highness,” answered Brandon, coolly, and with a smile which the most piercing eye could not have believed the mask to the agony then gnawing at his nerves, “it is the interest of my rivals to exaggerate the little ailments of a weak constitution. I thank Providence that I am now entirely recovered; and at no time of my life have I been less unable to discharge — so far as my *native* and *mental* incapacities will allow — the duties of any occupation, however arduous. Nay, as the brute grows accustomed to the mill, so have I grown wedded to business; and even the brief relaxation I have now allowed myself seems to me rather irksome than pleasurable.”

“I rejoice to hear you speak thus,” answered his royal highness, warmly; “and I trust for many years, and,” added he, in a lower tone, “in the highest chamber of the senate, that we may profit by your talents. The times are those in which many occasions occur that oblige all true friends of the Con-

stitution to quit minor employment for that great constitutional one that concerns us all, the highest and the meanest; and" (the royal voice sank still lower) "I feel justified in assuring you that the office of chief-justice alone is not considered by his Majesty as a sufficient reward for your generous sacrifice of present ambition to the difficulties of government."

Brandon's proud heart swelled, and that moment the veriest pains of hell would scarcely have been felt.

While the aspiring schemer was thus agreeably engaged, Mauleverer, sliding through the crowd with that grace which charmed every one, old and young, and addressing to all he knew some lively or affectionate remark, made his way to the dancers, among whom he had just caught a glimpse of Lucy. "I wonder," he thought, "whom she is dancing with. I hope it is that ridiculous fellow, Mossop, who tells a good story against himself; or that handsome ass, Belmont, who looks at his own legs, instead of seeming to have eyes for no one but his partner. Ah! if Tarquin had but known women as well as I do, he would have had no reason to be rough with Lucretia. 'Tis a thousand pities that experience comes, in women as in the world, just when it begins to be no longer of use to us!"

As he made these moral reflections, Mauleverer gained the dancers, and beheld Lucy listening, with downcast eyes and cheeks that *evidently* blushed, to a young man whom Mauleverer acknowledged at once to be one of the best-looking fellows he had ever seen. The stranger's countenance, despite an extreme darkness of complexion, was, to be sure, from the great regularity of the features, rather effeminate; but, on the other hand, his figure, though slender and graceful, betrayed to an experienced eye an extraordinary proportion of sinew and muscle; and even the dash of effeminacy in the countenance was accompanied by so manly and frank an air, and was so perfectly free from all coxcombry or self-conceit, that it did not in the least decrease the prepossessing effect of his appearance. An angry and bitter pang shot across that portion of Mauleverer's frame which the earl thought fit, for want of another name, to call his heart. "How cursedly

pleased she looks!" muttered he. "By Heaven! that stolen glance under the left eyelid, dropped as suddenly as it is raised; and *he*—ha! how firmly he holds that little hand! I think I see him paddle with it; and then the dog's earnest, intent look,—and she all blushes, though she dare not look up to meet his gaze, feeling it by intuition. Oh, the demure, modest, shamefaced hypocrite! How silent she is! She can prate enough to *me*! I would give my promised garter if she would but talk to him. Talk, talk, laugh, prattle, only simper, in God's name, and I shall be happy. But that bashful, blushing silence,—it is insupportable. Thank Heaven, the dance is over! Thank Heaven, again! I have not felt such pains since the last nightmare I had after dining with her father!"

With a face all smiles, but with a mien in which more dignity than he ordinarily assumed was worn, Mauleverer now moved towards Lucy, who was leaning on her partner's arm. The earl, who had ample tact where his consummate selfishness did not warp it, knew well how to act the lover, without running ridiculously into the folly of seeming to play the hoary dangler. He sought rather to be lively than sentimental; and beneath the wit to conceal the suitor.

Having paid, then, with a careless gallantry his first compliments, he entered into so animated a conversation, interspersed with so many *naïve* yet palpably just observations on the characters present, that perhaps he had never appeared to more brilliant advantage. At length, as the music was about to recommence, Mauleverer, with a careless glance at Lucy's partner, said, "Will Miss Brandon now allow me the agreeable duty of conducting her to her father?"

"I believe," answered Lucy, and her voice suddenly became timid, "that, according to the laws of the rooms, I am engaged to this gentleman for another dance."

Clifford, in an assured and easy tone, replied in assent.

As he spoke, Mauleverer honoured him with a more accurate survey than he had hitherto bestowed on him; and whether or not there was any expression of contempt or superciliousness in the survey, it was sufficient to call up the indignant blood

to Clifford's cheek. Returning the look with interest, he said to Lucy, "I believe, Miss Brandon, that the dance is about to begin;" and Lucy, obeying the hint, left the aristocratic Mauleverer to his own meditations.

At that moment the master of the ceremonies came bowing by, half afraid to address so great a person as Mauleverer, but willing to show his respect by the profoundness of his salutation.

"Aha! my dear Mr. ——!" said the earl, holding out both his hands to the Lycurgus of the rooms; "how are you? Pray can you inform me who that young — *man* is, now dancing with Miss Brandon?"

"It is — let me see — oh! it is a Captain Clifford, my lord! a very fine young man, my lord! Has your lordship never met him?"

"Never! Who is he? One under your more especial patronage?" said the earl, smiling.

"Nay, indeed!" answered the master of the ceremonies, with a simper of gratification; "I scarcely know who he is yet; the captain only made his appearance here to-night for the first time. He came with two other gentlemen, — ah! there they are!" and he pointed the earl's scrutinizing attention to the elegant forms of Mr. Augustus Tomlinson and Mr. Ned Pepper, just emerging from the card-rooms. The swagger of the latter gentleman was so peculiarly important that Mauleverer, angry as he was, could scarcely help laughing. The master of the ceremonies noted the earl's countenance, and remarked that "that fine-looking man seemed disposed to give himself *airs*."

"Judging from the gentleman's appearance," said the earl, dryly (Ned's face, to say truth, did betoken his affection for the bottle), "I should imagine that he was much more accustomed to give himself *thorough draughts*!"

"Ah!" renewed the *arbiter elegantiarum*, who had not heard Mauleverer's observation, which was uttered in a very low voice, — "ah! they seem real dashers!"

"Dashers!" repeated Mauleverer; "true, *haberdashers*!" Long Ned now, having in the way of his profession

acquitted himself tolerably well at the card-table, thought he had purchased the right to parade himself through the rooms, and show the ladies what stuff a Pepper could be made of.

Leaning with his left hand on Tomlinson's arm, and employing the right in fanning himself furiously with his huge *chapeau bras*, the lengthy adventurer stalked slowly along, now setting out one leg jauntily, now the other, and ogling "the ladies" with a kind of Irish look, — namely, a look between a wink and a stare.

Released from the presence of Clifford, who kept a certain check on his companions, the apparition of Ned became glaringly conspicuous; and wherever he passed, a universal whisper succeeded.

"Who can he be?" said the widow Matemore. "'Tis a droll creature; but what a head of hair!"

"For my part," answered the spinster Sneerall, "I think he is a linendraper in disguise; for I heard him talk to his companion of 'tape.'"

"Well, well," thought Mauleverer, "it would be but kind to seek out Brandon, and hint to him in what company his niece seems to have fallen!" and so thinking, he glided to the corner where, with a gray-headed old politician, the astute lawyer was conning the affairs of Europe.

In the interim the second dance had ended, and Clifford was conducting Lucy to her seat, each charmed with the other, when he found himself abruptly tapped on the back, and turning round in alarm, — for such taps were not unfamiliar to him, — he saw the cool countenance of Long Ned, with one finger sagaciously laid beside the nose.

"How now?" said Clifford, between his ground teeth; "did I not tell thee to put that huge bulk of thine as far from me as possible?"

"Humph!" grunted Ned; "if these are my thanks, I may as well keep my kindness to myself; but know you, my kid, that Lawyer Brandon is here, peering through the crowd at this very moment, in order to catch a glimpse of that woman's face of thine."

"Ha!" answered Clifford, in a very quick tone; "begone, then! I will meet you without the rooms immediately."

Clifford now turned to his partner, and bowing very low, in reality to hide his face from those sharp eyes which had once seen it in the court of Justice Burnflat, said: "I trust, madam, I shall have the honour to meet you again. Is it, if I may be allowed to ask, with your celebrated uncle that you are staying, or —"

"With my father," answered Lucy, concluding the sentence Clifford had left unfinished; "but my uncle has been with us, though I fear he leaves us to-morrow."

Clifford's eyes sparkled; he made no answer, but bowing again, receded into the crowd and disappeared. Several times that night did the brightest eyes in Somersetshire rove anxiously round the rooms in search of our hero; but he was seen no more.

It was on the stairs that Clifford encountered his comrades; taking an arm of each, he gained the door without any adventure worth noting, save that, being kept back by the crowd for a few moments, the moralizing Augustus Tomlinson, who honoured the moderate Whigs by enrolling himself among their number, took up, *pour passer le temps*, a tall gold-headed cane, and weighing it across his finger with a musing air, said, "Alas! among our supporters we often meet heads as heavy, but of what a different metal!" The crowd now permitting, Augustus was walking away with his companions, and, in that absence of mind characteristic of philosophers, unconsciously bearing with him the gold-headed object of his reflection, when a stately footman, stepping up to him, said, "Sir, my cane!"

"Cane, fellow!" said Tomlinson. "Ah, I am so absent! Here is thy cane. Only think of my carrying off the man's cane, Ned! Ha, ha!"

"Absent indeed!" grunted a knowing chairman, watching the receding figures of the three gentlemen; "body o' me! but it was *the cane* that was about to be absent!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Whackum. My dear rogues, dear boys, Bluster and Dingboy! you are the bravest fellows that ever scoured yet! — SHADWELL: *Scourers.*

Cato, the Thessalian, was wont to say that some things may be done unjustly, that many things may be done justly. — LORD BACON (being a justification of every rascality).

ALTHOUGH our three worthies had taken unto themselves a splendid lodging in Milsom Street, which, to please Ned, was over a hairdresser's shop, yet, instead of returning thither, or repairing to such taverns as might seem best befitting their fashion and garb, they struck at once from the gay parts of the town, and tarried not till they reached a mean-looking alehouse in a remote suburb.

The door was opened to them by an elderly lady; and Clifford, stalking before his companions into an apartment at the back of the house, asked if the other gentlemen were come yet.

"No," returned the dame. "Old Mr. Bags came in about ten minutes ago; but hearing more work might be done, he went out again."

"Bring the lush and the pipes, old blone!" cried Ned, throwing himself on a bench; "we are never at a loss for company!"

"You, indeed, never can be, who are always inseparably connected with the object of your admiration," said Tomlinson, dryly, and taking up an old newspaper. Ned, who, though choleric, was a capital fellow, and could bear a joke on himself, smiled, and drawing forth a little pair of scissors, began trimming his nails.

"Curse me," said he, after a momentary silence, "if this is not a devilish deal pleasanter than playing the fine gentleman in that great room, with a rose in one's button-hole! What say you, Master Lovett?"

Clifford (as henceforth, despite his other aliases, *we* shall denominate our hero), who had thrown himself at full length on a bench at the far end of the room, and who seemed plunged into a sullen revery, now looked up for a moment, and then, turning round and presenting the dorsal part of his body to Long Ned, muttered, "Pish!"

"Harkye, Master Lovett!" said Long Ned, colouring. "I don't know what has come over you of late; but I would have you to learn that gentlemen are entitled to courtesy and polite behaviour; and so, d'ye see, if you ride your high horse upon me, splice my extremities if I won't have satisfaction!"

"Hist, man! be quiet," said Tomlinson, philosophically, snuffing the candles, —

" 'For companions to quarrel,
Is extremely immoral.' "

Don't you see that the captain is in a revery? What good man ever loves to be interrupted in his meditations? Even Alfred the Great could not bear it! Perhaps at this moment, with the true anxiety of a worthy chief, the captain is designing something for our welfare!"

"Captain indeed!" muttered Long Ned, darting a wrathful look at Clifford, who had not deigned to pay any attention to Mr. Pepper's threat; "for my part I cannot conceive what was the matter with us when we chose this green slip of the gallows-tree for our captain of the district. To be sure, he did very well at first, and that robbery of the old lord was not ill-planned; but lately —"

"Nay, nay," quoth Augustus, interrupting the gigantic grumbler; "the nature of man is prone to discontent. Allow that our present design of setting up the gay Lothario, and trying our chances at Bath for an heiress, is owing as much to Lovett's promptitude as to our invention."

"And what good will come of it?" returned Ned, as he lighted his pipe; "answer me that. Was I not dressed as fine as a lord, and did not I walk three times up and down that great room without being a jot the better for it?"

"Ah! but you know not how many secret conquests you may have made. You cannot win a prize by looking upon it."

"Humph!" grunted Ned, applying himself discontentedly to the young existence of his pipe.

"As for the captain's partner," renewed Tomlinson, who maliciously delighted in exciting the jealousy of the handsome "tax-collector," — for that was the designation by which Augustus thought proper to style himself and companions, — "I will turn Tory if she be not already half in love with him; and did you hear the old gentleman who cut into our rubber say what a fine fortune she had? Faith, Ned, it is lucky for us two that we all agreed to go shares in our marriage speculations; I fancy the worthy captain will think it a bad bargain for himself."

"I am not so sure of that, Mr. Tomlinson," said Long Ned, sourly eying his comrade. "Some women may be caught by a smooth skin and a showy manner; but *real* masculine beauty, — eyes, colour, and hair, — Mr. Tomlinson, must ultimately make its way; so hand me the brandy, and cease your jaw."

"Well, well," said Tomlinson, "I'll give you a toast, — 'The prettiest girl in England,' and that's Miss Brandon!"

"You shall give no such toast, sir!" said Clifford, starting from the bench. "What the devil is Miss Brandon to you? And now, Ned," seeing that the tall hero looked on him with an unfavourable aspect, "here's my hand; forgive me if I was uncivil. Tomlinson will tell you, in a maxim, men are changeable. Here's to your health; and it shall not be my fault, gentlemen, if we have not a merry evening!"

This speech, short as it was, met with great applause from the two friends; and Clifford, as president, stationed himself in a huge chair at the head of the table. Scarcely had he assumed this dignity, before the door opened, and half-a-dozen of the gentlemen confederates trooped somewhat noisily into the apartment.

"Softly, softly, messieurs," said the president, recovering all his constitutional gayety, yet blending it with a certain negligent command, — "respect for the chair, if you please! 'Tis the way with all assemblies where the public purse is a matter of deferential interest!"

"Hear him!" cried Tomlinson.

"What, my old friend Bags!" said the president; "you have not come empty-handed, I will swear; your honest face is like the table of contents to the good things in your pockets!"

"Ah, Captain Clifford," said the veteran, groaning, and shaking his reverend head, "I have seen the day when there was not a lad in England forked so largely, so comprehensively-like, as I did. But, as King Lear says at Common Garden, 'I be's old now!'"

"But your zeal is as youthful as ever, my fine fellow," said the captain, soothingly; "and if you do not clean out the public as thoroughly as heretofore, it is not the fault of your inclinations."

"No, that it is not!" cried the "tax-collectors" unanimously.

"And if ever a pocket is to be picked neatly, quietly, and effectually," added the complimentary Clifford, "I do not know to this day, throughout the three kingdoms, a neater, quieter, and more effective set of fingers than Old Bags's!"

The veteran bowed disclaimingly, and took his seat among the heartfelt good wishes of the whole assemblage.

"And now, gentlemen," said Clifford, as soon as the revellers had provided themselves with their wonted luxuries, potatory and fumous, "let us hear your adventures, and rejoice our eyes with their produce. The gallant Attie shall begin; but first, a toast, — 'May those who leap from a hedge never leap from a tree!'"

This toast being drunk with enthusiastic applause, Fighting Attie began the recital of his little history.

"You sees, Captain," said he, putting himself in a martial position, and looking Clifford full in the face, "that I'm not addicted to much blarney. Little cry and much wool is my motto. At ten o'clock A.M. saw the enemy — in the shape of a Doctor of Divinity. 'Blow me,' says I to Old Bags, 'but I'll do his reverence!' 'Blow me,' says Old Bags, 'but you sha'n't, — you'll have us scragged if you touches the Church.' 'My grandmother!' says I. Bags tells the pals, — all in a fuss about it, — what care I? I puts on a decent dress, and goes to the doctor as a decayed soldier *wot* supplies

the shops in the turning line. His reverence — a fat jolly dog as ever you see — was at dinner over a fine roast pig; so I tells him I have some bargains at home for him. Splice me, if the doctor did not think he had got a prize; so he puts on his boots, and he comes with me to my house. But when I gets him into a lane, out come my pops. ‘Give up, Doctor,’ says I; ‘others must share the goods of the Church now.’ You has no idea what a row he made; but I did the thing, and there’s an end on’t.”

“Bravo, Attie!” cried Clifford; and the word echoed round the board. Attie put a purse on the table, and the next gentleman was called to confession.

“It skills not, boots not,” gentlest of readers, to record each of the narratives that now followed one another. Old Bags, in especial, preserved his well-earned reputation by emptying six pockets, which had been filled with every possible description of petty valuables. Peasant and prince appeared alike to have come under his hands; and perhaps the good old man had done in the town more towards effecting an equality of goods among different ranks than all the Reformers, from Cornwall to Carlisle. Yet so keen was his appetite for the sport that the veteran appropriator absolutely burst into tears at not having “forked more.”

“I love a warm-hearted enthusiasm,” cried Clifford, handling the movables, while he gazed lovingly on the ancient purloiner. “May new cases never teach us to forget Old Bags!”

As soon as this “sentiment” had been duly drunk, and Mr. Bagshot had dried his tears and applied himself to his favourite drink, — which, by the way, was “blue ruin,” — the work of division took place. The discretion and impartiality of the captain in this arduous part of his duty attracted universal admiration; and each gentleman having carefully pouched his share, the youthful president hemmed thrice, and the society became aware of a purposed speech.

“Gentlemen!” began Clifford, — and his main supporter, the sapient Augustus, shouted out, “Hear!” — “gentlemen, you all know that when some months ago you were pleased,

partly at the instigation of Gentleman George — God bless him! — partly from the exaggerated good opinion expressed of me by my friends, to elect me to the high honour of the command of this district, I myself was by no means ambitious to assume that rank, which I knew well was far beyond my merits, and that responsibility which I knew with equal certainty was too weighty for my powers. Your voices, however, overruled my own; and as Mr. Muddlepudd, the great metaphysician, in that excellent paper, ‘The Asinæum,’ was wont to observe, ‘the susceptibilities, innate, extensible, incomprehensible, and eternal,’ existing in my bosom, were infinitely more powerful than the shallow suggestions of reason, — that ridiculous thing which all wise men and judicious Asinæans sedulously stifle.”

“Plague take the man! what is he talking about?” said Long Ned, who we have seen was of an envious temper, in a whisper to Old Bags. Old Bags shook his head.

“In a word, gentlemen,” renewed Clifford, “your kindness overpowered me; and despite my cooler inclinations, I accepted your flattering proposal. Since then I have endeavoured, so far as I have been able, to advance your interests; I have kept a vigilant eye upon all my neighbours; I have, from county to county, established numerous correspondents; and our exertions have been carried on with a promptitude that has ensured success.

“Gentlemen, I do not wish to boast; but on these nights of periodical meetings, when every quarter brings us to go halves, — when we meet in private to discuss the affairs of the public, show our earnings as it were in privy council, and divide them amicably as it were in the Cabinet [“Hear! hear!” from Mr. Tomlinson], — it is customary for your captain for the time being to remind you of his services, engage your pardon for his deficiencies, and your good wishes for his future exertions. Gentlemen, has it ever been said of Paul Lovett that he heard of a prize and forgot to tell you of his news? [“Never! never!” loud cheering.] Has it ever been said of him that he sent others to seize the booty, and stayed at home to think how it should be spent? [“No! no!” repeated

cheers.] Has it ever been said of him that he took less share than his due of your danger, and more of your guineas? [Cries in the negative, accompanied with vehement applause.] Gentlemen, I thank you for these flattering and audible testimonials in my favour; but the points on which I have dwelt, however necessary to my honour, would prove but little for my merits; they might be worthy notice in your comrade, you demand more subtle duties in your chief. Gentlemen, has it ever been said of Paul Lovett that he sent out brave men on forlorn hopes; that he hazarded your own heads by *rash* attempts in acquiring pictures of King George's; that zeal, in short, was greater in him than caution, or that his love of a *quid*¹ ever made him neglectful of your just aversion to a *quod*?² [Unanimous cheering.]

"Gentlemen, since I have had the honour to preside over your welfare, Fortune, which favours the bold, has not been unmerciful to you! But three of our companions have been missed from our peaceful festivities. One, gentlemen, I myself expelled from our corps for ungentlemanlike practices; he picked pockets of *fogles*,³—it was a vulgar employment. Some of you, gentlemen, have done the same for amusement; Jack Littlefork did it for occupation. I expostulated with him in public and in private; Mr. Pepper cut his society; Mr. Tomlinson read him an essay on Real Greatness of Soul: all was in vain. He was pumped by the mob for the theft of a *bird's-eye wipe*. The fault I had borne with, — the detection was unpardonable; I expelled him. Who's here so base as would be a *fogle-hunter*? If any, speak; for him have I offended! Who's here so rude as would not be a gentleman? If any, speak; for him have I offended! I pause for a reply! What, none! then none have I offended. [Loud cheers.] Gentlemen, I may truly add, that I have done no more to Jack Littlefork than you should do to Paul Lovett! The next vacancy in our ranks was occasioned by the loss of Patrick Blunderbull. You know, gentlemen, the vehement exertions that I made to save that misguided creature, whom I had made exertions no less earnest to instruct. But he chose to swindle under the name of

¹ A guinea.² A prison.³ Handkerchiefs.

the 'Honourable Captain Smico;' the Peerage gave him the lie at once; his case was one of aggravation, and he was so remarkably ugly that he 'created no interest.' He left us for a foreign exile; and if as a man I lament him, I confess to you, gentlemen, as a 'tax-collector' I am easily consoled.

"Our third loss must be fresh in your memory. Peter Popwell, as bold a fellow as ever breathed, is no more! [A movement in the assembly.] Peace be with him! He died on the field of battle; shot dead by a Scotch Colonel, whom poor Popwell thought to rob of nothing with an empty pistol. His memory, gentlemen, — in solemn silence!

"These make the catalogue of our losses," resumed the youthful chief, so soon as the "red cup had crowned the memory" of Peter Popwell; "I am proud, even in sorrow, to think that the blame of those losses rests not with me. And now, friends and followers! Gentlemen of the Road, the Street, the Theatre, and the Shop! Prigs, Tobymen, and Squires of the Cross! according to the laws of our Society, I resign into your hands that power which for two quarterly terms you have confided to mine, ready to sink into your ranks as a comrade, nor unwilling to renounce the painful honour I have borne, — borne with much infirmity, it is true, but at least with a sincere desire to serve that cause with which you have intrusted me."

So saying, the captain descended from his chair amidst the most uproarious applause; and as soon as the first burst had partially subsided, Augustus Tomlinson rising, with one hand in his breeches' pocket and the other stretched out, said, —

"Gentlemen, I move that Paul Lovett be again chosen as our captain for the ensuing term of three months. [Deafening cheers.] Much might I say about his surpassing merits; but why dwell upon that which is obvious? Life is short! Why should speeches be long? Our lives, perhaps, are shorter than the lives of other men; why should not our harangues be of a suitable brevity? Gentlemen, I shall say but one word in favour of my excellent friend, — of mine, say I? ay, of mine, of yours. He is a friend to all of us! A prime minister is not more useful to his followers and more

burdensome to the public than I am proud to say is — Paul Lovett. [Loud plaudits.] What I shall urge in his favour is simply this: the man whom opposite parties unite in praising must have supereminent merit. Of all your companions, gentlemen, Paul Lovett is the only man who to that merit can advance a claim. [Applause.] You all know, gentlemen, that our body has long been divided into two factions, — each jealous of the other, each desirous of ascendancy, and each emulous which shall put the greatest number of fingers into the public pie. In the language of the vulgar, the one faction would be called ‘swindlers,’ and the other ‘highwaymen.’ I, gentlemen, who am fond of finding new names for things and for persons, and am a bit of a politician, call the one *Whigs*, and the other *Tories*. [Clamorous cheering.] Of the former body I am esteemed no uninfluential member; of the latter faction Mr. Bags is justly considered the most shining ornament. Mr. Attie and Mr. Edward Pepper can scarcely be said to belong entirely to either; they unite the good qualities of both. ‘British compounds’ some term them; I term them *Liberal Aristocrats*! [Cheers.] I now call upon you all, Whig, or Swindler, Tory, or Highwayman, ‘British Compounds,’ or Liberal Aristocrats, — I call upon you all to name me one man whom you will all agree to elect.”

All, — “Lovett forever!”

“Gentlemen,” continued the sagacious Augustus, “that shout is sufficient; without another word, I propose, as your captain, Mr. Paul Lovett.”

“And I seconds the motion!” said old Mr. Bags.

Our hero, being now by the unanimous applause of his confederates restored to the chair of office, returned thanks in a neat speech; and Scarlet Jem declared, with great solemnity, that it did equal honour to his head and heart.

The thunders of eloquence being hushed, *flashes of lightning*, or, as the vulgar say, *glasses of gin*, gleamed about. Good old Mr. Bags stuck, however, to his blue ruin, and Attie to the bottle of bingo; some, among whom were Clifford and the wise Augustus, called for wine; and Clifford, who exerted himself to the utmost in supporting the gay duties

of his station, took care that the song should vary the pleasures of the bowl. Of the songs we have only been enabled to preserve two. The first is by Long Ned; and though we confess we can see but little in it, yet (perhaps from some familiar allusion or other with which we are necessarily unacquainted) it produced a prodigious sensation. It ran thus:—

THE ROGUE'S RECIPE.

Your honest fool a rogue to make,
As great as can be seen, sir, —
Two hackneyed rogues you first must take,
Then place your fool between, sir.

Virtue 's a dunhill cock, ashamed
Of self when paired with game ones;
And wildest elephants are tamed
If stuck betwixt two tame ones.

The other effusion with which we have the honour to favour our readers is a very amusing duet which took place between Fighting Attie and a tall thin robber, who was a dangerous fellow in a mob, and was therefore called Mobbing Francis; it was commenced by the latter:—

MOBBING FRANCIS :

The best of all robbers as ever I knowed
Is the bold Fighting Attie, the pride of the road!—
Fighting Attie, my hero, I saw you to-day
A purse full of yellow boys seize;
And as, just at present, *I'm low in the lay*,
I'll borrow a *quid*, if you please.
Oh! bold Fighting Attie, the knowing, the natty,
By us all it must sure be confest,
Though your shoppers and snobbers are pretty good robbers,
A soldier is always the best.

FIGHTING ATTIE :

*Stubble your whids,*¹
You wants to trick I.
Lend you my *quids*?
Not one, by Dickey.

¹ Hold your tongue.

MOBBING FRANCIS:

Oh, what a beast is a niggardly ruffler,
Nabbing, grabbing all for himself !
Hang it, old fellow, I'll hit you a muffler,
Since you won't give me a pinch of the pelf.
You has not a heart for the *general distress*,
You cares not a mag if our party should fall,
And if Scarlet Jem were not good at a press,
By Goles, it would soon be all up with us all !
Oh, Scarlet Jem, he is trusty and trim,
Like his wig to his poll, sticks his conscience to him ;
But I vows I despises the fellow who prizes
More his own ends than the popular stock, sir ;
And the soldier as bones for himself and his crones,
Should be boned like a traitor himself at the block, sir.

The severe response of Mobbing Francis did not in the least ruffle the constitutional calmness of Fighting Attie; but the wary Clifford, seeing that Francis had lost his temper, and watchful over the least sign of disturbance among the company, instantly called for another song, and Mobbing Francis sullenly knocked down Old Bags.

The night was far gone, and so were the wits of the honest tax-gatherers, when the president commanded silence, and the convivialists knew that their chief was about to issue forth the orders for the ensuing term. Nothing could be better timed than such directions,—during merriment and before oblivion.

"Gentlemen," said the captain, "I will now, with your leave, impart to you all the plans I have formed for each. You, Attie, shall repair to London: be the Windsor road and the purlieus of Pimlico your especial care. Look you, my hero, to these letters; they will apprise you of much work. I need not caution you to silence. Like the oyster, you never open your mouth but for something. Honest Old Bags, a rich grazier will be in Smithfield on Thursday; his name is Hodges, and he will have somewhat like a thousand pounds in his pouch. He is green, fresh, and avaricious; offer to assist him in defrauding his neighbours in a bargain, and

cease not till thou hast *done* that with him which he wished to do to others. Be, excellent old man, like the frog-fish, which fishes for other fishes with two horns that resemble baits; the prey dart at the horns, and are down the throat in an instant! — For thee, dearest Jem, these letters announce a prize: fat is Parson Pliant; full is his purse; and he rides from Henley to Oxford on Friday, — I need say no more! As for the rest of you, gentlemen, on this paper you will see your destinations fixed. I warrant you, ye will find enough work till we meet again this day three months. Myself, Augustus Tomlinson, and Ned Pepper remain in Bath; we have business in hand, gentlemen, of paramount importance; should you by accident meet us, never acknowledge us, — we are *incog.*; striking at high game, and putting on falcon's plumes to do it in character, — you understand; but this accident can scarcely occur, for none of you will remain at Bath; by to-morrow night, may the road receive you. And now, gentlemen, speed the glass, and I'll give you a sentiment by way of a spur to it, —

“ ‘ Much sweeter than honey
Is other men's money ! ’ ”

Our hero's maxim was received with all the enthusiasm which agreeable truisms usually create. And old Mr. Bags rose to address the chair; unhappily for the edification of the audience, the veteran's foot slipped before he had proceeded further than “Mr. President;” he fell to the earth with a sort of reel, —

“ Like shooting stars he fell to rise no more ! ”

His body became a capital footstool for the luxurious Pepper. Now Augustus Tomlinson and Clifford, exchanging looks, took every possible pains to promote the hilarity of the evening; and before the third hour of morning had sounded, they had the satisfaction of witnessing the effects of their benevolent labours in the prostrate forms of all their companions. Long Ned, naturally more capacious than the rest, succumbed the last.

"As leaves of trees," said the chairman, waving his hand, —

"As leaves of trees the race of man is found,
Now *fresh with dew*, now withering on the ground."

"Well said, my Hector of Highways;" cried Tomlinson; and then helping himself to the wine, while he employed his legs in removing the supine forms of Scarlet Jem and Long Ned, he continued the Homeric quotation, with a pompous and self-gratulatory tone, —

"So flourish *these* when *those* have passed away!"

"We managed to get rid of our friends," began Clifford —

"Like Whigs in place," interrupted the politician.

"Right, Tomlinson, thanks to the milder properties of our drink, and perchance to the stronger qualities of our heads; and now tell me, my friend, what think you of our chance of success? Shall we catch an heiress or not?"

"Why, really," said Tomlinson, "women are like those calculations in arithmetic, which one can never bring to an exact account; for my part, I shall stuff my calves, and look out for a widow. You, my good fellow, seem to stand a fair chance with Miss —"

"Oh, name her not!" cried Clifford, colouring, even through the flush which wine had spread over his countenance. "Ours are not the lips by which her name should be breathed; and, faith, when I think of her, I do it anonymously."

"What, *have* you ever thought of her before this evening?"

"Yes, for months," answered Clifford. "You remember some time ago, when we formed the plan for robbing Lord Mauleverer, how, rather for frolic than profit, you robbed Dr. Slopperton, of Warlock, while I compassionately walked home with the old gentleman. Well, at the parson's house I met Miss Brandon — mind, if I speak of her by name, *you* must not; and, by Heaven! — But I won't swear. I accompanied her home. You know, before morning we robbed Lord Mauleverer; the affair made a noise, and I feared to endanger you all if I appeared in the vicinity of the robbery. Since then, business diverted my thoughts; we formed the plan of trying

a matrimonial speculation at Bath. I came hither, — guess my surprise at seeing *her* —”

“And your delight,” added Tomlinson, “at hearing she is as rich as she is pretty.”

“No!” answered Clifford, quickly; “that thought gives me no pleasure. You stare. I will try and explain. You know, dear Tomlinson, I’m not much of a canter, and yet my heart shrinks when I look on that innocent face, and hear that soft happy voice, and think that my love to her can be only ruin and disgrace; nay, that my very address is contamination, and my very glance towards her an insult.”

“Heyday!” quoth Tomlinson; “have you been under my instructions, and learned the true value of words, and can you have any scruples left on so easy a point of conscience? True, you may call your representing yourself to her as an unprofessional gentleman, and so winning her affections, deceit; but why call it deceit when a *genius for intrigue* is so much neater a phrase? In like manner, by marrying the young lady, if you say *you have ruined her*, you justly deserve to be annihilated; but why not say you have *saved yourself*, and then, my dear fellow, you will have done the most justifiable thing in the world.”

“Pish, man!” said Clifford, peevishly; “none of thy sophisms and sneers!”

“By the soul of Sir Edward Coke, I am serious! But look you, my friend! this is not a matter where it is *convenient* to have a tender-footed conscience. You see these fellows on the ground, all d—d clever, and so forth; but you and I are of a different order. I have had a classical education, seen the world, and mixed in decent society; you, too, had not been long a member of our club before you distinguished yourself above us all. Fortune smiled on your youthful audacity. You grew particular in horses and dress, frequented public haunts, and being a deuced good-looking fellow, with an inborn air of gentility and some sort of education, you became sufficiently well received to acquire in a short time the manner and tone of a — what shall I say? — a gentleman, and the taste to like suitable associates. This

is my case too! Despite our labours for the public weal, the ungrateful dogs see that we are above them; a single envious breast is sufficient to give us to the hangman. We have agreed that we are in danger; we have agreed to make an honourable retreat; we cannot do so without money. You know the vulgar distich among our set. Nothing can be truer, —

“ ‘ Hanging is ’nation
More nice than starvation ! ’ ”

You will not carry off some of the common stock, though I think you justly might, considering how much you have put into it. What, then, shall we do? Work we cannot, beg we will not; and, between you and me, we are cursedly extravagant! What remains but marriage?”

“It is true,” said Clifford, with a half sigh.

“You may well sigh, my good fellow. Marriage is a lackadaisical proceeding at best; but there is no resource. And now, when you have got a liking to a young lady who is as rich as a she-Cræsus, and so gilded the pill as bright as a lord mayor’s coach, what the devil have you to do with scruples?”

Clifford made no answer, and there was a long pause; perhaps he would not have spoken so frankly as he had done, if the wine had not opened his heart.

“How proud,” renewed Tomlinson, “the good old matron at Thames Court would be if you married a lady! You have not seen her lately?”

“Not for years,” answered our hero. “Poor old soul! I believe that she is well in health, and I take care that she should not be poor in pocket.”

“But why not visit her? Perhaps, like all great men, especially of a liberal turn of mind, you are ashamed of old friends, eh?”

“My good fellow, is that like me? Why, you know the beaux of our set look askant on me for not keeping up my dignity, robbing only in company with well-dressed gentlemen, and swindling under the name of a lord’s nephew. No, my reasons are these: first, you must know, that the old dame had set her heart on my turning out an honest man.”

"And so you have," interrupted Augustus, — "honest to your party; what more would you have from either prig or politician?"

"I believe," continued Clifford, not heeding the interruption, "that my poor mother, before she died, desired that I might be reared honestly; and strange as it may seem to you, Dame Lobkins is a conscientious woman in her own way, — it is not her fault if I have turned out as I have done. Now I know well that it would grieve her to the quick to see me what I am. Secondly, my friend, under my new names, various as they are, — Jackson and Howard, Russell and Pigwigin, Villiers and Gotobed, Cavendish and Solomons, — you may well suppose that the good persons in the neighbourhood of Thames Court have no suspicion that the adventurous and accomplished ruffler, at present captain of this district, under the new appellation of Lovett, is in reality no other than the obscure and surnameless Paul of the Mug. Now you and I, Augustus, have read human nature, though in the *black letter*; and I know well that were I to make my appearance in Thames Court, and were the old lady (as she certainly would, not from unkindness, but insobriety, — not that she loves me less, but heavy wet more) to divulge the secret of that appearance —"

"You know well," interrupted the vivacious Tomlinson, "that the identity of your former meanness with your present greatness would be easily traced; the envy and jealousy of your early friends aroused; a hint of your whereabouts and your aliases given to the police, and yourself grabbed, with a slight possibility of a hempen consummation."

"You conceive me exactly!" answered Clifford. "The fact is, that I have observed in nine cases out of ten our bravest fellows have been taken off by the treachery of some early sweetheart or the envy of some boyish friend. My destiny is not yet fixed. I am worthy of better things than a ride in the cart with a nosegay in my hand; and though I care not much about death in itself, I am resolved, if possible, not to die a highwayman. Hence my caution, and that prudential care for secrecy and safe asylums, which men less wise than

you have so often thought an unnatural contrast to my conduct on the road."

"Fools!" said the philosophical Tomlinson; "what has the bravery of a warrior to do with his insuring his house from fire?"

"However," said Clifford, "I send my good nurse a fine gift every now and then to assure her of my safety; and thus, notwithstanding my absence, I show my affection by my *presents*, — excuse a pun."

"And have you never been detected by any of your quondam associates?"

"Never! Remember in what a much more elevated sphere of life I have been thrown; and who could recognize the scamp Paul with a fustian jacket in gentleman Paul with a laced waistcoat? Besides, I have diligently avoided every place where I was likely to encounter those who saw me in childhood. You know how little I frequent flash houses, and how scrupulous I am in admitting new confederates into our band; you and Pepper are the only two of my associates — save my *protégé*, as you express it, who never deserts the cave — that possess a knowledge of my identity with the lost Paul; and as ye have both taken that dread oath to silence, which to disobey until indeed I be in the jail or on the gibbet, is almost to be assassinated, I consider my secret is little likely to be broken, save with my own consent."

"True," said Augustus, nodding; "one more glass, and to bed, Mr. Chairman."

"I pledge you, my friend; our last glass shall be philanthropically quaffed, — 'All fools, and may their money soon be parted!'"

"All fools!" cried Tomlinson, filling a bumper; "but I quarrel with the wisdom of your toast. May fools be rich, and rogues will never be poor! I would make a better livelihood off a rich fool than a landed estate."

So saying, the contemplative and ever-sagacious Tomlinson tossed off his bumper; and the pair, having kindly rolled by pedal applications the body of Long Ned into a safe and quiet corner of the room, mounted the stairs, arm-in-arm, in search of somnambular accommodations.

CHAPTER XVII.

THAT contrast of the hardened and mature,
The calm brow brooding o'er the project dark,
With the clear loving heart, and spirit pure
Of youth, — I love, yet, hating, love to mark !

H. FLETCHER.

ON the forenoon of the day after the ball, the carriage of William Brandon, packed and prepared, was at the door of his abode at Bath; meanwhile the lawyer was closeted with his brother.

"My dear Joseph," said the barrister, "I do not leave you without being fully sensible of your kindness evinced to me, both in coming hither, contrary to your habits, and accompanying me everywhere, despite of your tastes."

"Mention it not, my dear William," said the kind-hearted squire, "for your delightful society is to me the most agreeable (and that's what I can say of very few people like you; for, for my own part, I generally find the cleverest men *the most unpleasant*) in the world! And I think lawyers in particular (very different, indeed, from your tribe *you are!*) *perfectly intolerable!*"

"I have now," said Brandon, who with his usual nervous quickness of action was walking with rapid strides to and fro the apartment, and scarcely noted his brother's compliment, — "I have now another favour to request of you. Consider this house and these servants yours for the next month or two at least. Don't interrupt me, — it is no compliment, — I speak for our family benefit." And then seating himself next to his brother's armchair, for a fit of the gout made the squire a close prisoner, Brandon unfolded to his brother his cherished scheme of marrying Lucy to Lord Mauleverer. Notwithstanding the constancy of the earl's attentions to the heiress, the honest squire had never dreamed of their

palpable object; and he was overpowered with surprise when he heard the lawyer's expectations.

"But, my dear brother," he began, "so great a match for my Lucy, the Lord-Lieutenant of the Coun—"

"And what of that?" cried Brandon, proudly, and interrupting his brother. "Is not the race of Brandon, which has matched its scions with royalty, far nobler than that of the upstart stock of Mauleverer? What is there presumptuous in the hope that the descendant of the Earls of Suffolk should regild a faded name with some of the precious dust of the quondam silversmiths of London? Besides," he continued, after a pause, "Lucy will be rich, very rich, and before two years my rank may possibly be of the same order as Mauleverer's!"

The squire stared; and Brandon, not giving him time to answer, resumed. It is needless to detail the conversation; suffice it to say that the artful barrister did not leave his brother till he had gained his point, —till Joseph Brandon had promised to remain at Bath in possession of the house and establishment of his brother; to throw no impediment on the suit of Mauleverer; to cultivate society, as before; and above all, not to alarm Lucy, who evidently did not yet favour Mauleverer exclusively, by hinting to her the hopes and expectations of her uncle and father. Brandon, now taking leave of his brother, mounted to the drawing-room in search of Lucy. He found her leaning over the gilt cage of one of her feathered favourites, and speaking to the little inmate in that pretty and playful language in which all thoughts, innocent yet fond, should be clothed. So beautiful did Lucy seem, as she was thus engaged in her girlish and caressing employment, and so utterly unlike one meet to be the instrument of ambitious designs, and the sacrifice of worldly calculations, that Brandon paused, suddenly smitten at heart, as he beheld her. He was not, however, slow in recovering himself; he approached. "Happy he," said the man of the world, "for whom caresses and words like these are reserved!"

Lucy turned, "It is ill!" she said, pointing to the bird.

which sat with its feathers stiff and erect, mute and heedless even of that voice which was as musical as its own.

"Poor prisoner!" said Brandon; "even gilt cages and sweet tones cannot compensate to thee for the loss of the air and the wild woods!"

"But," said Lucy, anxiously, "it is not confinement which makes it ill! If you think so, I will release it instantly."

"How long have you had it?" asked Brandon.

"For three years!" said Lucy.

"And is it your *chief* favourite?"

"Yes; it does not sing so prettily as the other, but it is far more sensible, and *so* affectionate!"

"Can you release it then?" asked Brandon, smiling. "Would it not be better to see it die in your custody than to let it live and to see it no more?"

"Oh, no, no!" said Lucy, eagerly; "when I love any one, anything, I wish that to be happy, not me!"

As she said this, she took the bird from the cage; and bearing it to the open window, kissed it, and held it on her hand in the air. The poor bird turned a languid and sickly eye around it, as if the sight of the crowded houses and busy streets presented nothing familiar or inviting; and it was not till Lucy with a tender courage shook it gently from her, that it availed itself of the proffered liberty. It flew first to an opposite balcony; and then recovering from a short and as it were surprised pause, took a brief circuit above the houses; and after disappearing for a few minutes, flew back, circled the window, and re-entering, settled once more on the fair form of its mistress and nestled into her bosom.

Lucy covered it with kisses. "You see it will not leave me!" said she.

"Who can?" said the uncle, warmly, charmed for the moment from every thought but that of kindness for the young and soft creature before him,— "who can," he repeated with a sigh, "but an old and withered ascetic like myself? I must leave you indeed; see, my carriage is at the door! Will my beautiful niece, among the gayeties that surround her, condescend now and then to remember the crabbed lawyer,

and assure him by a line of her happiness and health? Though I rarely write any notes but those upon cases, *you*, at least, may be sure of an answer. And tell me, Lucy, if there be in all this city one so foolish as to think that these idle gems, useful only as a vent for my pride in you, can add a single charm to a beauty above all ornament?"

So saying, Brandon produced a leathern case; and touching a spring, the imperial flash of diamonds, which would have made glad many a patrician heart, broke dazzlingly on Lucy's eyes.

"No thanks, Lucy," said Brandon, in answer to his niece's disclaiming and shrinking gratitude; "I do honour to myself, not you; and now bless you, my dear girl. Farewell! Should any occasion present itself in which you require an immediate adviser, at once kind and wise, I beseech you, my dearest Lucy, as a parting request, to have no scruples in consulting Lord Mauleverer. Besides his friendship for me, he is much interested in you, and you may consult him with the more safety and assurance; because" (and the lawyer smiled) "he is perhaps the only man in the world whom my Lucy could not make in love with her. His gallantry may appear adulation, but it is never akin to love. Promise me that you will not hesitate in this."

Lucy gave the promise readily; and Brandon continued in a careless tone: "I hear that you danced last night with a young gentleman whom no one knew, and whose companions bore a very strange appearance. In a place like Bath, society is too mixed not to render the greatest caution in forming acquaintances absolutely necessary. You must pardon me, my dearest niece, if I remark that a young lady owes it not only to herself but to her relations to observe the most rigid circumspection of conduct. This is a wicked world, and the peach-like bloom of character is easily rubbed away. In these points Mauleverer can be of great use to you. His knowledge of character, his penetration into men, and his tact in manners are unerring. Pray, be guided by him; whomsoever he warns you against, you may be sure is unworthy of your acquaintance. God bless you! You *will* write to me often

and frankly, dear Lucy; tell me all that happens to you, — all that interests, nay, all that displeases.”

Brandon then, who had seemingly disregarded the blushes with which during his speech Lucy's cheeks had been spread, folded his niece in his arms, and hurried, as if to hide his feelings, into his carriage. When the horses had turned the street, he directed the postilions to stop at Lord Mauleverer's. “Now,” said he to himself, “if I can get this clever coxcomb to second my schemes, and play according to my game and not according to his own vanity, I shall have a knight of the garter for my nephew-in-law!”

Meanwhile Lucy, all in tears, for she loved her uncle greatly, ran down to the squire to show him Brandon's magnificent present.

“Ah,” said the squire, with a sigh, “few men were born with more good, generous, and great qualities (pity only that his chief desire was to get on in the world; for my part, I think *no motive makes greater and more cold-hearted rogues*) than my brother William!”



CHAPTER XVIII.

WHY did she love him? Curious fool, be still!
Is human love the growth of human will?
To her he might be gentleness!

LORD BYRON.

IN three weeks from the time of his arrival, Captain Clifford was the most admired man in Bath. It is true the gentlemen, who have a quicker tact as to the respectability of their own sex than women, might have looked a little shy upon him, had he not himself especially shunned appearing intrusive, and indeed rather avoided the society of men than courted it; so that after he had fought a duel with a baronet (the son of a shoemaker), who called him *one* Clifford, and had exhibited a flea-bitten horse, allowed to be the finest in Bath, he rose

insensibly into a certain degree of respect with the one sex as well as popularity with the other. But what always attracted and kept alive suspicion, was his intimacy with so peculiar and *dashing* a gentleman as Mr. Edward Pepper. People could get over a certain frankness in Clifford's address, but the most lenient were astounded by the swagger of Long Ned. Clifford, however, not insensible to the ridicule attached to his acquaintances, soon managed to pursue his occupations alone; nay, he took a lodging to himself, and left Long Ned and Augustus Tomlinson (the latter to operate as a check on the former) to the quiet enjoyment of the hairdresser's apartments. He himself attended all public gayeties; and his mien, and the appearance of wealth which he maintained, procured him access into several private circles which pretended to be exclusive, — as if people who had daughters ever could be exclusive! Many were the kind looks, nor few the inviting letters, which he received; and if his sole object had been to marry an heiress, he would have found no difficulty in attaining it. But he devoted himself entirely to Lucy Brandon; and to win one glance from her, he would have renounced all the heiresses in the kingdom. Most fortunately for him, Mauleverer, whose health was easily deranged, had fallen ill the very day William Brandon left Bath; and his lordship was thus rendered unable to watch the movements of Lucy, and undermine or totally prevent the success of her lover. Miss Brandon, indeed, had at first, melted by the kindness of her uncle, and struck with the sense of his admonition (for she was no self-willed young lady, who was determined to be in love), received Captain Clifford's advances with a coldness which, from her manner the first evening they had met at Bath, occasioned him no less surprise than mortification. He retreated, and recoiled on the squire, who, patient and bold, as usual, was sequestered in his favourite corner. By accident, Clifford trod on the squire's gouty digital; and in apologizing for the offence, was so struck by the old gentleman's good-nature and peculiarity of expressing himself, that without knowing who he was, he entered into conversation with him. There was an off-hand sort of liveliness and candour, not to

say wit, about Clifford, which always had a charm for the elderly, who generally like frankness above all the cardinal virtues; the squire was exceedingly pleased with him. The acquaintance, once begun, was naturally continued without difficulty when Clifford ascertained who was his new friend; and next morning, meeting in the pump-room, the squire asked Clifford to dinner. The *entrée* to the house thus gained, the rest was easy. Long before Mauleverer recovered his health, the mischief effected by his rival was almost beyond redress; and the heart of the pure, the simple, the affectionate Lucy Brandon was more than half lost to the lawless and vagrant cavalier who officiates as the hero of this tale.

One morning, Clifford and Augustus strolled out together. "Let us," said the latter, who was in a melancholy mood, "leave the busy streets, and indulge in a philosophical conversation on the nature of man, while we are enjoying a little fresh air in the country." Clifford assented to the proposal, and the pair slowly sauntered up one of the hills that surround the city of Bladud.

"There are certain moments," said Tomlinson, looking pensively down at his kerseymere gaiters, "when we are like the fox in the nursery rhyme, 'The fox had a wound, he could not tell where,' — we feel extremely unhappy, and we cannot tell *why*. A dark and sad melancholy grows over us; we shun the face of man; we wrap ourselves in our thoughts like silkworms; we mutter fag-ends of dismal songs; tears come into our eyes; we recall all the misfortunes that have ever happened to us; we stoop in our gait, and bury our hands in our breeches-pockets; we say, 'What is life? — a stone to be shied into a horsepond!' We pine for some congenial heart, and have an itching desire to talk prodigiously about ourselves; all *other* subjects seem weary, stale, and unprofitable. We feel as if a fly could knock us down, and are in a humour to fall in love, and make a very sad piece of business of it. Yet with all this weakness we have at these moments a finer opinion of ourselves than we ever had before. We call our megrims the melancholy of a sublime soul, the yearnings of an indigestion

we denominate yearnings after immortality, nay, sometimes ‘a proof of the nature of the soul!’ May I find some biographer who understands such sensations well, and may he style those melting emotions the offspring of the poetical character,¹ which, in reality, are the offspring of — a mutton-chop!”

“You jest pleasantly enough on your low spirits,” said Clifford; “but I have a cause for mine.”

“What then?” cried Tomlinson. “So much the easier is it to cure them. The mind can cure the evils that spring *from* the mind. It is only a fool and a quack and a driveller when it professes to heal the evils that spring from the body. *My* blue devils spring from the body; consequently my mind, which, as you know, is a particularly wise mind, wrestles not against them. Tell me frankly,” renewed Augustus, after a pause, “do you ever repent? Do you ever think, if you had been a shop-boy with a white apron about your middle, that you would have been a happier and a better member of society than you now are?”

“Repent!” said Clifford, fiercely; and his answer opened more of his secret heart, its motives, its reasonings, and its peculiarities than were often discernible, — “repent! that is the idlest word in our language. No; the moment I repent, that moment I reform! Never can it seem to me an atonement for crime merely to regret it. My mind would lead me, not to regret, but to repair! Repent! no, not yet. The older I grow, the more I see of men and of the callings of social life, the more I, an open knave, sicken at the glossed and covert dishonesties around. I acknowledge no allegiance to society. From my birth to this hour, I have received no single favour from its customs or its laws; openly I war against

¹ *Vide* Moore’s “Life of Byron,” in which it is satisfactorily shown that if a man fast forty-eight hours, then eat three lobsters, and drink Heaven knows how many bottles of claret; if, when he wake the next morning, he sees himself abused as a demon by half the periodicals of the country, — if, in a word, he be broken in his health, irregular in his habits, unfortunate in his affairs, unhappy in his home, and if then he should be so extremely eccentric as to be low-spirited and misanthropical, the low spirits and the misanthropy are by no means to be attributed to the above agreeable circumstances, but, God wot, to the “poetical character”!

it, and patiently will I meet its revenge. This may be crime; but it looks light in my eyes when I gaze around, and survey on all sides the masked traitors who acknowledge large debts to society, who profess to obey its laws, adore its institutions, and, above all — oh, how righteously! — attack all those who attack it, and who yet lie and cheat and defraud and peculate, — publicly reaping all the comforts, privately filching all the profits. Repent! — of what? I come into the world friendless and poor; I find a body of laws hostile to the friendless and the poor! To those laws hostile to me, then, I acknowledge hostility in my turn. Between us are the conditions of war. Let them expose a weakness, — I insist on my right to seize the advantage; let them defeat me, and I allow their right to destroy.”¹

“Passion,” said Augustus, coolly, “is the usual enemy of reason; in your case it is the friend.”

The pair had now gained the summit of a hill which commanded a view of the city below. Here Augustus, who was a little short-winded, paused to recover breath. As soon as he had done so, he pointed with his forefinger to the scene beneath, and said enthusiastically, “What a subject for contemplation!”

Clifford was about to reply, when suddenly the sound of laughter and voices was heard behind. “Let us fly!” cried Augustus; “on this day of spleen man delights me not — or woman either.”

“Stay!” said Clifford, in a trembling accent; for among those voices he recognized one which had already acquired over him an irresistible and bewitching power. Augustus sighed, and reluctantly remained motionless. Presently a winding in the road brought into view a party of pleasure, some on foot, some on horseback, others in the little vehicles which even at that day haunted watering-places, and called themselves “Flies” or “Swallows.”

But among the gay procession Clifford had only eyes for one! Walking with that elastic step which so rarely survives

¹ The author need not, he hopes, observe that these sentiments are Mr. Paul Clifford's, not his.

the first epoch of youth, by the side of the heavy chair in which her father was drawn, the fair beauty of Lucy Brandon threw — at least in the eyes of her lover — a magic and a lustre over the whole group. He stood for a moment, stilling the heart that leaped at her bright looks and the gladness of her innocent laugh; and then recovering himself, he walked slowly, and with a certain consciousness of the effect of his own singularly handsome person, towards the party. The good squire received him with his usual kindness, and informed him, according to that *lucidus ordo* which he so especially favoured, of the whole particulars of their excursion. There was something worthy of an artist's sketch in the scene at that moment: the old squire in his chair, with his benevolent face turned towards Clifford, and his hands resting on his cane, Clifford himself bowing down his stately head to hear the details of the father; the beautiful daughter on the other side of the chair, her laugh suddenly stilled, her gait insensibly more composed, and blush chasing blush over the smooth and peach-like loveliness of her cheek; the party, of all sizes, ages, and attire, affording ample scope for the caricaturist; and the pensive figure of Augustus Tomlinson (who, by the by, was exceedingly like Liston) standing apart from the rest, on the brow of the hill where Clifford had left him, and moralizing on the motley procession, with one hand hid in his waistcoat, and the other caressing his chin, which slowly and pendulously with the rest of his head moved up and down.

As the party approached the brow of the hill, the view of the city below was so striking that there was a general pause for the purpose of survey. One young lady in particular drew forth her pencil, and began sketching, while her mamma looked complacently on, and abstractedly devoured a sandwich. It was at this time, in the general pause, that Clifford and Lucy found themselves — Heaven knows how! — next to each other, and at a sufficient distance from the squire and the rest of the party to feel in some measure alone. There was a silence in both which neither dared to break; when Lucy, after looking at and toying with a flower that she had brought

from the place which the party had been to see, accidentally dropped it; and Clifford and herself stooping at the same moment to recover it, their hands met. Involuntarily, Clifford detained the soft fingers in his own; his eyes, that encountered hers, so spell-bound and arrested them that for once they did not sink beneath his gaze; his lips moved, but many and vehement emotions so suffocated his voice that no sound escaped them. But all the heart was in the eyes of each; that moment fixed their destinies. Henceforth there was an era from which they dated a new existence; a nucleus around which their thoughts, their remembrances, and their passions clung. The great gulf was passed; they stood on the same shore, and felt that though still apart and disunited, on that shore was no living creature but themselves! Meanwhile Augustus Tomlinson, on finding himself surrounded by persons eager to gaze and to listen, broke from his moodiness and reserve. Looking full at his next neighbour, and flourishing his right hand in the air, till he suffered it to rest in the direction of the houses and chimneys below, he repeated that moral exclamation which had been wasted on Clifford, with a more solemn and a less passionate gravity than before, —

“What a subject, ma’am, for contemplation!”

“Very sensibly said, indeed, sir,” said the lady addressed, who was rather of a serious turn.

“I never,” resumed Augustus in a louder key, and looking round for auditors, — “I never see a great town from the top of a hill without thinking of an apothecary’s shop!”

“Lord, sir!” said the lady. Tomlinson’s end was gained. Struck with the quaintness of the notion, a little crowd gathered instantly around him, to hear it further developed.

“Of an apothecary’s shop, ma’am!” repeated Tomlinson. “There lie your simples and your purges and your cordials and your poisons, — all things to heal and to strengthen and to destroy. There are drugs enough in that collection to save you, to cure you all; but none of you know how to use them, nor what medicines to ask for, nor what portions to take; so that the greater part of you swallow a wrong dose, and die of the remedy!”

"But if the town be the apothecary's shop, what, in the plan of your idea, stands for the apothecary?" asked an old gentleman, who perceived at what Tomlinson was driving.

"The apothecary, sir," answered Augustus, stealing his notion from Clifford, and sinking his voice lest the true proprietor should overhear him (Clifford was otherwise employed), — "the apothecary, sir, is the LAW! It is the law that stands behind the counter, and dispenses to each man the dose he should take. To the poor it gives bad drugs gratuitously; to the rich, pills to stimulate the appetite; to the latter, premiums for luxury; to the former, only speedy refuges from life! Alas! either your apothecary is but an ignorant quack, or his science itself is but in its cradle. He blunders as much as you would do if left to your own selection. Those who have recourse to him seldom speak gratefully of his skill. He relieves you, it is true, — but of your money, not your malady; and the only branch of his profession in which he is an adept is that which enables him to *bleed* you! O mankind!" continued Augustus, "what noble creatures you ought to be! You have keys to all sciences, all arts, all mysteries, but one! You have not a notion how you ought to be governed; you cannot frame a tolerable law, for the life and soul of you! You make yourselves as uncomfortable as you can by all sorts of galling and vexatious institutions, and you throw the blame upon 'Fate.' You lay down rules it is impossible to comprehend, much less to obey; and you call each other monsters, because you cannot conquer the impossibility! You invent all sorts of vices, under pretence of making laws for preserving virtue; and the anomalous artificialities of conduct yourselves produce, you say you are born with; you make a machine by the perversest art you can think of, and you call it, with a sigh, 'Human Nature.' With a host of good dispositions struggling at your breasts, you insist upon libelling the Almighty, and declaring that he meant you to be wicked. Nay, you even call the man mischievous and seditious who begs and implores you to be one jot better than you are. O mankind! you are like a nosegay bought at Covent Garden. The flowers are lovely, the scent delicious. Mark that glori-

ous hue; contemplate that bursting petal! How beautiful, how redolent of health, of nature, of the dew and breath and blessing of Heaven, are you all! But as for the dirty piece of string that ties you together, one would think you had picked it out of the kennel."

So saying, Tomlinson turned on his heel, broke away from the crowd, and solemnly descended the hill. The party of pleasure slowly followed; and Clifford, receiving an invitation from the squire to partake of his family dinner, walked by the side of Lucy, and felt as if his spirit were drunk with the airs of Eden.

A brother squire, who among the gayeties of Bath was almost as forlorn as Joseph Brandon himself, partook of the Lord of Warlock's hospitality. When the three gentlemen adjourned to the drawing-room, the two elder sat down to a game at backgammon, and Clifford was left to the undisturbed enjoyment of Lucy's conversation. She was sitting by the window when Clifford joined her. On the table by her side were scattered books, the charm of which (they were chiefly poetry) she had only of late learned to discover; *there* also were strewn various little masterpieces of female ingenuity, in which the fairy fingers of Lucy Brandon were especially formed to excel. The shades of evening were rapidly darkening over the empty streets; and in the sky, which was cloudless and transparently clear, the stars came gradually out one by one, until, —

"As water does a sponge, so *their soft light*
Filled the void, hollow, universal air."

Beautiful evening! (if we, as well as Augustus Tomlinson, may indulge in an apostrophe) — beautiful evening! For thee all poets have had a song, and surrounded thee with rills and waterfalls and dews and flowers and sheep and bats and melancholy and owls; yet we must confess that to us, who in this very sentimental age are a bustling, worldly, hard-minded person, jostling our neighbours, and thinking of the main chance, — to us thou art never so charming as when we meet thee walking in thy gray hood through the emptying streets

and among the dying sounds of a city. We love to feel the stillness where all, two hours back, was clamour. We love to see the dingy abodes of Trade and Luxury—those restless patients of earth's constant fever—contrasted and canopied by a heaven full of purity and quietness and peace. We love to fill our thought with speculations on man, even though the man be the muffin-man, rather than with inanimate objects, —hills and streams, —things to dream about, not to meditate on. Man is the subject of far nobler contemplation, of far more glowing hope, of a far purer and loftier vein of sentiment, than all the "floods and fells" in the universe; and that, sweet evening! is one reason why we like that the earnest and tender thoughts thou excitest within us should be rather surrounded by the labours and tokens of our species than by sheep and bats and melancholy and owls. But whether, most blessed evening! thou delightest us in the country or in the town, thou equally disposest us to make and to feel love! Thou art the cause of more marriages and more divorces than any other time in the twenty-four hours! Eyes that were common eyes to us before, touched by thy enchanting and magic shadows, become inspired, and preach to us of heaven. A softness settles on features that were harsh to us while the sun shone; a mellow "light of love" reposes on the complexion which by day we would have steeped "full fathom five" in a sea of Mrs. Gowland's lotion. What, then, thou modest hypocrite! to those who *already* and deeply love, — what, then, of danger and of paradise dost thou bring?

Silent, and stilling the breath which heaved in both quick and fitfully, Lucy and Clifford sat together. The streets were utterly deserted; and the loneliness, as they looked below, made them feel the more intensely not only the emotions which swelled within them, but the undefined and electric sympathy which, in uniting them, divided them from the world. The quiet around was broken by a distant strain of rude music; and as it came nearer, two forms of no poetical order grew visible. The one was a poor blind man, who was drawing from his flute tones in which the melancholy beauty

of the air compensated for any deficiency (the deficiency was but slight) in the execution. A woman much younger than the musician, and with something of beauty in her countenance, accompanied him, holding a tattered hat, and looking wistfully up at the windows of the silent street. We said two forms; we did the injustice of forgetfulness to another, — a rugged and simple friend, it is true, but one that both minstrel and wife had many and moving reasons to love. This was a little wiry terrier, with dark piercing eyes, that glanced quickly and sagaciously in all quarters from beneath the shaggy covert that surrounded them. Slowly the animal moved onward, pulling gently against the string by which he was held, and by which he guided his master. Once his fidelity was tempted: another dog invited him to play; the poor terrier looked anxiously and doubtfully round, and then, uttering a low growl of denial, pursued —

“The noiseless tenour of his way.”

The little procession stopped beneath the window where Lucy and Clifford sat; for the quick eye of the woman had perceived them, and she laid her hand on the blind man's arm, and whispered him. He took the hint, and changed his air into one of love. Clifford glanced at Lucy; her cheek was dyed in blushes. The air was over; another succeeded, — it was of the same kind; a third, — the burden was still unaltered; and then Clifford threw into the street a piece of money, and the dog wagged his abridged and dwarfed tail, and darting forward, picked it up in his mouth; and the woman (she had a kind face!) patted the officious friend, even before she thanked the donor, and then she dropped the money with a cheering word or two into the blind man's pocket, and the three wanderers moved slowly on. Presently they came to a place where the street had been mended, and the stones lay scattered about. Here the woman no longer trusted to the dog's guidance, but anxiously hastened to the musician, and led him with evident tenderness and minute watchfulness over the rugged way. When they had passed the danger, the man stopped; and before he released the hand which had

guided him, he pressed it gratefully, and then both the husband and the wife stooped down and caressed the dog. This little scene—one of those rough copies of the loveliness of human affections, of which so many are scattered about the highways of the world—both the lovers had involuntarily watched; and now as they withdrew their eyes,—those eyes settled on each other,—Lucy's swam in tears.

"To be loved and tended by the one I love," said Clifford, in a low voice, "I would walk blind and barefoot over the whole earth!"

Lucy sighed very gently; and placing her pretty hands (the one clasped over the other) upon her knee, looked down wistfully on them, but made no answer. Clifford drew his chair nearer, and gazed on her, as she sat; the long dark eyelashes drooping over her eyes, and contrasting the ivory lids; her delicate profile half turned from him, and borrowing a more touching beauty from the soft light that dwelt upon it; and her full yet still scarcely developed bosom heaving at thoughts which she did not analyze, but was content to feel at once vague and delicious. He gazed, and his lips trembled; he longed to speak; he longed to say but those words which convey what volumes have endeavoured to express and have only weakened by detail,—"*I love.*" How he resisted the yearnings of his heart, we know not,—but he did resist; and Lucy, after a confused and embarrassed pause, took up one of the poems on the table, and asked him some questions about a particular passage in an old ballad which he had once pointed to her notice. The passage related to a border chief, one of the Armstrongs of old, who, having been seized by the English and condemned to death, vented his last feelings in a passionate address to his own home—his rude tower—and his newly wedded bride. "Do you believe," said Lucy, as their conversation began to flow, "that one so lawless and eager for bloodshed and strife as this robber is described to be, could be so capable of soft affections?"

"I do," said Clifford, "because he was not sensible that he was as criminal as you esteem him. If a man cherish the idea that his actions are not evil, he will retain at his heart

all its better and gentler sensations as much as if he had never sinned. The savage murders his enemy, and when he returns home is not the less devoted to his friend or the less anxious for his children. To harden and embrate the kindly dispositions, we must not only indulge in guilt but feel that we are guilty. Oh! many that the world load with their opprobrium are capable of acts — nay, have committed acts — which in others the world would reverence and adore. Would you know whether a man's heart be shut to the power of love, — ask what he is, not to his foes, but to his friends! Crime, too," continued Clifford, speaking fast and vehemently, while his eyes flashed and the dark blood rushed to his cheek, — "crime, — what is crime? Men embody their worst prejudices, their most evil passions, in a heterogeneous and contradictory code; and whatever breaks this code they term a crime. When they make no distinction in the penalty — that is to say, in the estimation — awarded both to murder and to a petty theft imposed on the weak will by famine, we ask nothing else to convince us that they are ignorant of the very nature of guilt, and that they make up in ferocity for the want of wisdom."

Lucy looked in alarm at the animated and fiery countenance of the speaker. Clifford recovered himself after a moment's pause, and rose from his seat, with the gay and frank laugh which made one of his peculiar characteristics. "There is a singularity in politics, Miss Brandon," said he, "which I dare say you have often observed, — namely, that those who are least important are always most noisy, and that the chief people who lose their temper are those who have nothing to gain in return."

As Clifford spoke, the doors were thrown open, and some visitors to Miss Brandon were announced. The good squire was still immersed in the vicissitudes of his game; and the sole task of receiving and entertaining "the company," as the chambermaids have it, fell, as usual, upon Lucy. Fortunately for her, Clifford was one of those rare persons who possess eminently the talents of society. There was much in his gay and gallant temperament, accompanied as it was with sentiment and ardour, that resembled our beau-ideal of those chev-

aliers, ordinarily peculiar to the Continent, — heroes equally in the drawing-room and the field. Observant, courteous, witty, and versed in the various accomplishments that combine (that most unfrequent of all unions!) vivacity with grace, he was especially formed for that brilliant world from which his circumstances tended to exclude him. Under different auspices, he might have been — Pooh! we are running into a most pointless commonplace; what might any man be under auspices different from those by which his life has been guided? Music soon succeeded to conversation, and Clifford's voice was of necessity put into requisition. Miss Brandon had just risen from the harpsichord, as he sat down to perform his part; and she stood by him with the rest of the group while he sang. Only twice his eye stole to that spot which her breath and form made sacred to him; once when he began, and once when he concluded his song. Perhaps the recollection of their conversation inspired him; certainly it dwelt upon his mind at the moment, — threw a richer flush over his brow, and infused a more meaning and heartfelt softness into his tone.

STANZAS.

When I leave thee, oh! ask not the world what that heart
Which adores thee to others may be!

I know that I sin when from thee I depart,
But my guilt shall not light upon thee!

My life is a river which glasses a ray
That hath deigned to descend from above;
Whatever the banks that o'ershadow its way,
It mirrors the light of thy love.

Though the waves may run high when the night wind awakes,
And hurries the stream to its fall;
Though broken and wild be the billows it makes,
Thine image still trembles on all!"

While this ominous love between Clifford and Lucy was thus finding fresh food in every interview and every opportunity, the unfortunate Mauleverer, firmly persuaded that his complaint was a relapse of what he termed the "Warlock dyspepsia," was waging dire war with the remains of the beef

and pudding, which he tearfully assured his physicians "were lurking in his constitution." As Mauleverer, though com-
plaisant, like most men of unmistakable rank, to all his acquaintances, whatever might be their grade, possessed but very few friends intimate enough to enter his sick-chamber, and none of that few were at Bath, it will readily be perceived that he was in blissful ignorance of the growing fortunes of his rival; and to say the exact truth, illness, which makes a man's thoughts turn very much upon himself, banished many of the most tender ideas usually floating in his mind around the image of Lucy Brandon. His pill superseded his passion; and he felt that there are draughts in the world more powerful in their effects than those in the phials of Alcidonis.¹ He very often thought, it is true, how pleasant it would be for Lucy to smooth his pillow, and Lucy to prepare that mixture; but then Mauleverer had an excellent valet, who hoped to play the part enacted by Gil Blas towards the honest Licentiate, and to nurse a legacy while he was nursing his master. And the earl, who was tolerably good-tempered, was forced to confess that it would be scarcely possible for any one "to know his ways better than Smoothson." Thus, during his illness, the fair form of his intended bride little troubled the peace of the noble adorer. And it was not till he found himself able to eat three good dinners consecutively, with a tolerable appetite, that Mauleverer recollected that he was violently in love. As soon as this idea was fully reinstated in his memory, and he had been permitted by his doctor to allow himself "a little cheerful society," Mauleverer resolved to go to the rooms for an hour or two.

It may be observed that most great personages have some favourite place, some cherished Baïæ, at which they love to throw off their state, and to play the amiable instead of the splendid; and Bath at that time, from its gayety, its ease, the variety of character to be found in its haunts, and the obliging manner in which such characters exposed themselves to ridicule, was exactly the place calculated to please a man like Mauleverer, who loved at once to be admired and to satir-

¹ See Marmontel's pretty tale of "Les Quatres Flacons."

ize. He was therefore an idolized person at the city of Bladud; and as he entered the rooms he was surrounded by a whole band of imitators and sycophants, delighted to find his lordship looking so much better and declaring himself so convalescent. As soon as the earl had bowed and smiled, and shaken hands sufficiently to sustain his reputation, he sauntered towards the dancers in search of Lucy. He found her not only exactly in the same spot in which he had last beheld her, but dancing with exactly the same partner who had before provoked all the gallant nobleman's jealousy and wrath. Mauleverer, though not by any means addicted to preparing his compliments beforehand, had just been conning a delicate speech for Lucy; but no sooner did the person of her partner flash on him than the whole flattery vanished at once from his recollection. He felt himself grow pale; and when Lucy turned, and seeing him near, addressed him in the anxious and soft tone which she thought due to her uncle's friend on his recovery, Mauleverer bowed, confused and silent; and that green-eyed passion, which would have convulsed the *mind* of a true lover, altering a little the course of its fury, effectually disturbed the *manner* of the courtier.

Retreating to an obscure part of the room, where he could see all without being conspicuous, Mauleverer now employed himself in watching the motions and looks of the young pair. He was naturally a penetrating and quick observer, and in this instance jealousy sharpened his talents; he saw enough to convince him that Lucy was already attached to Clifford; and being, by that conviction, fully persuaded that Lucy was necessary to his own happiness, he resolved to lose not a moment in banishing Captain Clifford from her presence, or at least in instituting such inquiries into that gentleman's relatives, rank, and respectability as would, he hoped, render such banishment a necessary consequence of the research.

Fraught with this determination, Mauleverer repaired at once to the retreat of the squire, and engaging him in conversation, bluntly asked him who the deuce Miss Brandon was dancing with.

The squire, a little piqued at this *brusquerie*, replied by a

long eulogium on Paul; and Mauleverer, after hearing it throughout with the blandest smile imaginable, told the squire, very politely, that he was sure Mr. Brandon's good-nature had misled him. "Clifford!" said he, repeating the name, — "Clifford! It is one of those names which are particularly selected by persons nobody knows, — first, because the name is good, and secondly, because it is common. My long and dear friendship with your brother makes me feel peculiarly anxious on any point relative to his niece; and, indeed, my dear William, overrating, perhaps, my knowledge of the world and my influence in society, but not my affection for him, besought me to assume the liberty of esteeming myself a friend, nay, even a relation of yours and Miss Brandon's; so that I trust you do not consider my caution impertinent."

The flattered squire assured him that he was particularly honoured, so far from deeming his lordship (which never could be the case with people so distinguished as *his lordship was, especially!*) *impertinent*.

Lord Mauleverer, encouraged by this speech, artfully renewed, and succeeded, if not in convincing the squire that the handsome captain was a suspicious character, at least in persuading him that common prudence required that he should find out exactly who the handsome captain was, especially as he was in the habit of dining with the squire thrice a week, and dancing with Lucy every night.

"See," said Mauleverer, "he approaches you now; I will retreat to the chair by the fireplace, and you shall cross-examine him, — I have no doubt you will do it with the utmost delicacy."

So saying, Mauleverer took possession of a seat where he was not absolutely beyond hearing (slightly deaf as he was) of the ensuing colloquy, though the position of his seat screened him from sight. Mauleverer was esteemed a man of the most punctilious honour in private life, and he would not have been seen in the act of listening to other people's conversation for the world.

Hemming with an air and resettling himself as Clifford

approached, the squire thus skilfully commenced the attack: "Ah, ha! my good Captain Clifford, and how do you do? I saw you (and I am *very glad, my friend, as every one else is, to see you*) at a distance. And where have you left my daughter?"

"Miss Brandon is dancing with Mr. Muskwel, sir," answered Clifford.

"Oh! she is! Mr. Muskwel, — humph! Good family the Muskwells, — came from Primrose Hall. Pray, Captain, — not that I want to know for my own sake, for I am a strange, odd person, I believe, and I am thoroughly convinced (some people are censorious, and others, thank God, are not!) of your respectability, — what family do you come from? You won't think my — my caution impertinent?" added the shrewd old gentleman, borrowing that phrase which he thought so friendly in the mouth of Lord Mauleverer.

Clifford coloured for a moment, but replied with a quiet archness of look, "Family! oh, my dear sir, I come from an old family, — a very old family indeed."

"So I always thought; and in what part of the world?"

"Scotland, sir, — all our family come from Scotland; namely, all who live long do, — the rest die young."

"Ay, particular air does agree with particular constitutions. I, for instance, could not live in all countries; not — you take me — in the North!"

"Few honest men *can* live there," said Clifford, dryly.

"And," resumed the squire, a little embarrassed by the nature of his task, and the cool assurance of his young friend, — "and pray, Captain Clifford, what regiment do you belong to?"

"Regiment? — oh, the Rifles!" answered Clifford. ("Deuce is in me," muttered he, "if I can resist a jest, though I break my neck over it.")

"A very gallant body of men," said the squire.

"No doubt of that, sir!" rejoined Clifford.

"And do you think, Captain Clifford," renewed the squire, "that it is a good corps for getting on?"

"It is rather a bad one for getting off," muttered the

Captain; and then aloud, "Why, we have not much interest at court, sir."

"Oh! but then there is a wider scope, as my brother the lawyer says — and no man knows better — for merit. I dare say you have seen many a man elevated from the ranks?"

"Nothing more common, sir, than such elevation; and so great is the virtue of our corps, that I have also known not a few willing to transfer the honour to their comrades."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the squire, opening his eyes at such disinterested magnanimity.

"But," said Clifford, who began to believe he might carry the equivoke too far, and who thought, despite of his jesting, that it was possible to strike out a more agreeable vein of conversation — "but, sir, if you remember, you have not yet finished that youthful hunting adventure of yours, when the hounds were lost at Burnham Copse."

"Oh, very true," cried the squire, quite forgetting his late suspicions; and forthwith he began a story that promised to be as long as the chase it recorded. So charmed was he, when he had finished it, with the character of the gentleman who had listened to it so delightedly, that on rejoining Mauleverer, he told the earl, with an important air, that he had strictly examined the young captain, and that he had fully convinced himself of the excellence of his family, as well as the rectitude of his morals. Mauleverer listened with a countenance of polite incredulity; he had heard but little of the conversation that had taken place between the pair; but on questioning the squire upon sundry particulars of Clifford's birth, parentage, and property, he found him exactly as ignorant as before. The courtier, however, seeing further expostulation was in vain, contented himself with patting the squire's shoulder, and saying, with a mysterious urbanity, "Ah, sir, you are too good!"

With these words he turned on his heel, and, not yet despairing, sought the daughter. He found Miss Brandon just released from dancing, and with a kind of paternal gallantry, he offered his arm to parade the apartments. After some preliminary flourish, and reference for the thousandth

time to his friendship for William Brandon, the earl spoke to her about that "fine-looking young man who called himself Captain Clifford."

Unfortunately for Mauleverer, he grew a little too unguarded, as his resentment against the interference of Clifford warmed with his language, and he dropped in his anger one or two words of caution, which especially offended the delicacy of Miss Brandon.

"Take care how I encourage, my lord!" said Lucy, with glowing cheeks, repeating the words which had so affronted her, "I really must beg you —"

"You mean, dear Miss Brandon," interrupted Mauleverer, squeezing her hand with respectful tenderness, "that you must beg me to apologize for my inadvertent expression. I do most sincerely. If I had felt less interest in your happiness, believe me, I should have been more guarded in my language."

Miss Brandon bowed stiffly, and the courtier saw, with secret rage, that the country beauty was not easily appeased, even by an apology from Lord Mauleverer. "I have seen the time," thought he, "when young unmarried ladies would have deemed *an affront* from *me* an honour! They would have gone into hysterics at an *apology*!" Before he had time to make his peace, the squire joined them; and Lucy, taking her father's arm, expressed her wish to return home. The squire was delighted at the proposition. It would have been but civil in Mauleverer to offer his assistance in those little attentions preparatory to female departure from balls. He hesitated for a moment. "It keeps one so long in those cursed thorough draughts," thought he, shivering. "Besides, it is just possible that I may not marry her, and it is no good risking a cold (above all, at the beginning of winter) for nothing!" Fraught with this prudential policy, Mauleverer then resigned Lucy to her father, and murmuring in her ear that "her displeasure made him the most wretched of men," concluded his adieu by a bow penitentially graceful.

About five minutes afterwards, he himself withdrew. As he was wrapping his corporeal treasure in his *roquelaire* of

sables, previous to immersing himself in his chair, he had the mortification of seeing Lucy, who with her father, from some cause or other, had been delayed in the hall, handed to the carriage by Captain Clifford. Had the earl watched more narrowly than in the anxious cares due to himself he was enabled to do, he would, to his consolation, have noted that Lucy gave her hand with an averted and cool air, and that Clifford's expressive features bore rather the aspect of mortification than triumph.

He did not, however, see more than the action; and as he was borne homeward with his flambeaux and footmen preceding him, and the watchful Smoothson by the side of the little vehicle, he muttered his determination of writing by the very next post to Brandon all his anger for Lucy and all his jealousy of her evident lover.

While this doughty resolve was animating the great soul of Mauleverer, Lucy reached her own room, bolted the door, and throwing herself on her bed, burst into a long and bitter paroxysm of tears. So unusual were such visitors to her happy and buoyant temper, that there was something almost alarming in the earnestness and obstinacy with which she now wept.

"What!" said she, bitterly, "have I placed my affections upon a man of uncertain character, and is my infatuation so clear that an acquaintance dare hint at its imprudence? And yet his manner—his tone! No, no, there can be no reason for shame in loving him!" And as she said this, her heart smote her for the coldness of her manner towards Clifford on his taking leave of her for the evening. "Am I," she thought, weeping yet more vehemently than before,— "am I so worldly, so base, as to feel altered towards him the moment I hear a syllable breathed against his name? Should I not, on the contrary, have clung to his image with a greater love, if he were attacked by others? But my father, my dear father, and my kind, prudent uncle,—something is due to them; and they would break their hearts if I loved one whom they deemed unworthy. Why should I not summon courage, and tell him of the suspicions respecting him? One candid word would

dispel them. Surely it would be but kind in me towards him, to give him an opportunity of disproving all false and dishonouring conjectures. And why this reserve, when so often, by look and hint, if not by open avowal, he has declared that he loves me, and knows—he *must* know—that he is not indifferent to me? Why does he never speak of his parents, his relations, his home?”

And Lucy, as she asked this question, drew from a bosom whose hue and shape might have rivalled hers who won Cymon to be wise,¹ a drawing which she herself had secretly made of her lover, and which, though inartificially and even rudely done, yet had caught the inspiration of memory, and breathed the very features and air that were stamped already ineffaceably upon a heart too holy for so sullied an idol. She gazed upon the portrait as if it could answer her question of the original; and as she looked and looked, her tears slowly ceased, and her innocent countenance relapsed gradually into its usual and eloquent serenity. Never, perhaps, could Lucy's own portrait have been taken at a more favourable moment. The unconscious grace of her attitude; her dress loosened; the modest and youthful voluptuousness of her beauty; the tender cheek to which the virgin bloom, vanished for a while, was now all glowingly returning; the little white soft hand on which that cheek leaned, while the other contained the picture upon which her eyes fed; the half smile just conjured to her full, red, dewy lips, and gone the moment after, yet again restored,—all made a picture of such enchanting loveliness that we question whether Shakspeare himself could have fancied an earthly shape more meet to embody the vision of a Miranda or a Viola. The quiet and maiden neatness of the apartment gave effect to the charm; and there was a poetry even in the snowy furniture of the bed, the shutters partly unclosed and admitting a glimpse of the silver moon, and the solitary lamp just contending with the purer ray of the skies, and so throwing a mixed and softened light around the chamber.

She was yet gazing on the drawing, when a faint stream of

¹ See Dryden's poem of "Cymon and Iphigenia."

music stole through the air beneath her window, and it gradually rose till the sound of a guitar became distinct and clear, suiting with, not disturbing, the moonlit stillness of the night. The gallantry and romance of a former day, though at the time of our story subsiding, were not quite dispelled; and nightly serenades under the casements of a distinguished beauty were by no means of unfrequent occurrence. But Lucy, as the music floated upon her ear, blushed deeper and deeper, as if it had a dearer source to her heart than ordinary gallantry; and raising herself on one arm from her incumbent position, she leaned forward to catch the sound with a greater and more unerring certainty.

After a prelude of some moments a clear and sweet voice accompanied the instrument, and the words of the song were as follows:—

CLIFFORD'S SERENADE.

There is a world where every night
My spirit meets and walks with thine;
And hopes I dare not tell thee light,
Like stars of Love, that world of mine!

Sleep! — to the waking world my heart
Hath now, methinks, a stranger grown;
Ah, sleep! that I may feel thou art
Within *one* world that is my own.

As the music died away, Lucy sank back once more, and the drawing which she held was pressed (with cheeks glowing, though unseen, at the act) to her lips. And though the character of her lover was uncleared, though she herself had come to no distinct resolution even to inform him of the rumours against his name, yet so easily restored was her trust in him, and so soothing the very thought of his vigilance and his love, that before an hour had passed, her eyes were closed in sleep. The drawing was laid, as a spell against grief, under her pillow; and in her dreams she murmured *his* name, and unconscious of reality and the future, smiled tenderly as she did so!

CHAPTER XIX.

COME, the plot thickens! and another fold
Of the warm cloak of mystery wraps us around.

And for their loves ?

Behold the seal is on them !

Tanner of Tyburn.

WE must not suppose that Clifford's manner and tone were towards Lucy Brandon such as they seemed to others. Love refines every roughness; and that truth which nurtures tenderness is never barren of grace. Whatever the habits and comrades of Clifford's life, he had at heart many good and generous qualities. They were not often perceptible, it is true, — first, because he was of a gay and reckless turn; secondly, because he was not easily affected by any external circumstances; and thirdly, because he had the policy to affect among his comrades only such qualities as were likely to give him influence with them. Still, however, his better genius broke out whenever an opportunity presented itself. Though no "Corsair," romantic and unreal, an Ossianic shadow becoming more vast in proportion as it recedes from substance; though no grandly-imagined lie to the fair proportions of human nature, but an erring man in a very prosaic and homely world, — Clifford still mingled a certain generosity and chivalric spirit of enterprise even with the practices of his profession. Although the name of Lovett, by which he was chiefly known, was one peculiarly distinguished in the annals of the adventurous, it had never been coupled with rumours of cruelty or outrage; and it was often associated with anecdotes of courage, courtesy, good humour, or forbearance. He was one whom a real love was peculiarly calculated to soften and to redeem. The boldness, the candour, the unselfishness of his temper, were components of nature

upon which affection invariably takes a strong and deep hold. Besides, Clifford was of an eager and aspiring turn; and the same temper and abilities which had in a very few years raised him in influence and popularity far above all the chivalric band with whom he was connected, when once inflamed and elevated by a higher passion, were likely to arouse his ambition from the level of his present pursuits, and reform him, ere too late, into a useful, nay, even an honourable member of society. We trust that the reader has already perceived that, despite his early circumstances, his manner and address were not such as to unfit him for a lady's love. The comparative refinement of his exterior is easy of explanation, for he possessed a natural and inborn gentility, a quick turn for observation, a ready sense both of the ridiculous and the graceful; and these are materials which are soon and lightly wrought from coarseness into polish. He had been thrown, too, among the leaders and heroes of his band; many not absolutely low in birth, nor debased in habit. He had associated with the Barringtons of the day, — gentlemen who were admired at Ranelagh, and made speeches worthy of Cicero, when they were summoned to trial. He had played his part in public places; and as Tomlinson was wont to say after his classic fashion, "the triumphs accomplished in the field had been planned in the ball-room." In short, he was one of those accomplished and elegant highwaymen of whom we yet read wonders, and by whom it would have been delightful to have been robbed: and the aptness of intellect which grew into wit with his friends, softened into sentiment with his mistress. There is something, too, in beauty (and Clifford's person, as we have before said, was possessed of even uncommon attractions) which lifts a beggar into nobility; and there was a distinction in his gait and look which supplied the air of rank and the tone of courts. Men, indeed, skilled like Mauleverer in the subtleties of manner, might perhaps have easily detected in him the want of that indescribable essence possessed only by persons reared in good society; but that want being shared by so many persons of indisputable birth and fortune, conveyed no particular reproach. To Lucy, indeed, brought

up in seclusion, and seeing at Warlock none calculated to refine her taste in the fashion of an air or phrase to a very fastidious standard of perfection, this want was perfectly imperceptible; she remarked in her lover only a figure everywhere unequalled, an eye always eloquent with admiration, a step from which grace could never be divorced, a voice that spoke in a silver key, and uttered flatteries delicate in thought and poetical in word; even a certain originality of mind, remark, and character, occasionally approaching to the *bizarre*, yet sometimes also to the elevated, possessed a charm for the imagination of a young and not unenthusiastic female, and contrasted favourably, rather than the reverse, with the dull insipidity of those she ordinarily saw. Nor are we sure that the mystery thrown about him, irksome as it was to her, and discreditable as it appeared to others, was altogether ineffectual in increasing her love for the adventurer; and thus Fate, which transmutes in her magic crucible all opposing metals into that one which she is desirous to produce, swelled the wealth of an ill-placed and ominous passion by the very circumstances which should have counteracted and destroyed it.

We are willing, by what we have said, not to defend Clifford, but to redeem Lucy in the opinion of our readers for loving so unwisely; and when they remember her youth, her education, her privation of a mother, of all female friendship, even of the vigilant and unrelaxing care of some protector of the opposite sex, we do not think that what was so natural will be considered by any inexcusable.

Mauleverer woke the morning after the ball in better health than usual, and consequently more in love than ever. † According to his resolution the night before, he sat down to write a long letter to William Brandon: it was amusing and witty as usual; but the wily nobleman succeeded, under the cover of wit, in conveying to Brandon's mind a serious apprehension lest his cherished matrimonial project should altogether fail. The account of Lucy and of Captain Clifford contained in the epistle instilled, indeed, a double portion of sourness into the professionally acrid mind of the lawyer; and as it so

happened that he read the letter just before attending the court upon a case in which he was counsel to the crown, the witnesses on the opposite side of the question felt the full effects of the barrister's ill humour. The case was one in which the defendant had been engaged in swindling transactions to a very large amount; and among his agents and assistants was a person of the very lowest orders, but who, seemingly enjoying large connections, and possessing natural acuteness and address, appeared to have been of great use in receiving and disposing of such goods as were fraudulently obtained. As a witness against the latter person appeared a pawnbroker, who produced certain articles that had been pledged to him at different times by this humble agent. Now, Brandon, in examining the guilty go-between, became the more terribly severe in proportion as the man evinced that semblance of unconscious stolidity which the lower orders can so ingeniously assume, and which is so peculiarly adapted to enrage and to baffle the gentlemen of the bar. At length, Brandon entirely subduing and quelling the stubborn hypocrisy of the culprit, the man turned towards him a look between wrath and beseechingness, muttering, —

“Aha! *if* so be, Counsellor Prandon, you knew vat I knows, you would not go for to bully *I* so!”

“And pray, my good fellow, what is it that you know that should make me treat you as if I thought you an honest man?”

The witness had now relapsed into sullenness, and only answered by a sort of grunt. Brandon, who knew well how to sting a witness into communicativeness, continued his questioning till the witness, re-aroused into anger, and it may be into indiscretion, said in a low voice, —

“Hax Mr. Swoppem the pawnbroker what I sold 'im on the 15th hof February, exactly twenty-three yearn ago.”

Brandon started back, his lips grew white, he clenched his hands with a convulsive spasm; and while all his features seemed distorted with an earnest yet fearful intensity of expectation, he poured forth a volley of questions, so incoherent and so irrelevant that he was immediately called to order

by his learned brother on the opposite side. Nothing further could be extracted from the witness. The pawnbroker was resummoned: he appeared somewhat disconcerted by an appeal to his memory so far back as twenty-three years; but after taking some time to consider, during which the agitation of the usually cold and possessed Brandon was remarkable to all the court, he declared that he recollected no transaction whatsoever with the witness at that time. In vain were all Brandon's efforts to procure a more elucidatory answer. The pawnbroker was impenetrable, and the lawyer was compelled reluctantly to dismiss him. The moment the witness left the box, Brandon sank into a gloomy abstraction, — he seemed quite to forget the business and the duties of the court; and so negligently did he continue to conclude the case, so purposeless was the rest of his examination and cross-examination, that the cause was entirely marred, and a verdict "Not guilty" returned by the jury.

The moment he left the court, Brandon repaired to the pawnbroker's; and after a conversation with Mr. Swoppem, in which he satisfied that honest tradesman that his object was rather to reward than intimidate, Swoppem confessed that twenty-three years ago the witness had met him at a public-house in Devereux Court, in company with two other men, and sold him several articles in plate, ornaments, etc. The great bulk of these articles had, of course, long left the pawnbroker's abode; but he still thought a stray trinket or two, not of sufficient worth to be reset or remodelled, nor of sufficient fashion to find a ready sale, lingered in his drawers. Eagerly, and with trembling hands, did Brandon toss over the motley contents of the mahogany reservoirs which the pawnbroker now submitted to his scrutiny. Nothing on earth is so melancholy a prospect as a pawnbroker's drawer! Those little, quaint, valueless ornaments, — those true-lovers' knots, those oval locketts, those battered rings, girdled by initials, or some brief inscription of regard or of grief, — what tales of past affections, hopes, and sorrows do they not tell! But no sentiment of so general a sort ever saddened the hard mind of William Brandon, and now less than at any time could such

reflections have occurred to him. Impatiently he threw on the table, one after another, the baubles once hoarded perchance with the tenderest respect, till at length his eyes sparkled, and with a nervous gripe he seized upon an old ring which was inscribed with letters, and circled a heart containing hair. The inscription was simply, "W. B. to Julia." Strange and dark was the expression that settled on Brandon's face as he regarded this seemingly worthless trinket. After a moment's gaze, he uttered an inarticulate exclamation, and thrusting it into his pocket, renewed his search. He found one or two other trifles of a similar nature; one was an ill-done miniature set in silver, and bearing at the back sundry half-effaced letters, which Brandon construed at once (though no other eye could) into "Sir John Brandon, 1635, *Ætat.* 28;" the other was a seal stamped with the noble crest of the house of Brandon, 'A bull's head, ducally crowned and armed, Or.' As soon as Brandon had possessed himself of these treasures, and arrived at the conviction that the place held no more, he assured the conscientious Swoppem of his regard for that person's safety, rewarded him munificently, and went his way to Bow Street for a warrant against the witness who had commended him to the pawnbroker. On his road thither, a new resolution occurred to him. "Why make all public," he muttered to himself, "if it *can* be avoided? and it *may* be avoided!" He paused a moment, then retraced his way to the pawnbroker's, and, after a brief mandate to Mr. Swoppem, returned home. In the course of the same evening the witness we refer to was brought to the lawyer's house by Mr. Swoppem, and there held a long and private conversation with Brandon; the result of this seemed a compact to their mutual satisfaction, for the man went away safe, with a heavy purse and a light heart, although sundry shades and misgivings did certainly ever and anon cross the latter; while Brandon flung himself back in his seat with the triumphant air of one who has accomplished some great measure, and his dark face betrayed in every feature a joyousness and hope which were unfrequent guests, it must be owned, either to his countenance or his heart.

So good a man of business, however, was William Brandon that he allowed not the event of that day to defer beyond the night his attention to his designs for the aggrandizement of his niece and house. By daybreak the next morning he had written to Lord Mauleverer, to his brother, and to Lucy. To the last his letter, couched in all the anxiety of fondness and the caution of affectionate experience, was well calculated to occasion that mingled shame and soreness which the wary lawyer rightly judged would be the most effectual enemy to an incipient passion. "I have accidentally heard," he wrote, "from a friend of mine, just arrived from Bath, of the glaring attentions paid to you by a Captain Clifford; I will not, my dearest niece, wound you by repeating what also I heard of your manner in receiving them. I know the ill-nature and the envy of the world; and I do not for a moment imagine that my Lucy, of whom I am so justly proud, would countenance, from a petty coquetry, the advances of one whom she could never marry, or evince to any suitor partiality unknown to her relations, and certainly placed in a quarter which could never receive their approbation. I do not credit the reports of the idle, my dear niece; but if I discredit, you must not slight them. I call upon your prudence, your delicacy, your discretion, your sense of right, at once and effectually to put a stop to all impertinent rumours: dance with this young man no more; do not let him be of your party in any place of amusement, public or private; avoid even seeing him if you are able, and throw in your manner towards him that decided coldness which the world cannot mistake." Much more did the skilful uncle write, but all to the same purpose, and for the furtherance of the same design. His letter to his brother was not less artful. He told him at once that Lucy's preference of the suit of a handsome fortune-hunter was the public talk, and besought him to lose not a moment in quelling the rumour. "You may do so easily," he wrote, "by avoiding the young man; and should he be very importunate, return at once to Warlock. Your daughter's welfare must be dearer to you than anything."

To Mauleverer, Brandon replied by a letter which turned

first on public matters, and then slid carelessly into the subject of the earl's information.

Among the admonitions which he ventured to give Maul-everer, he dwelt, not without reason, on the want of tact displayed by the earl in not manifesting that pomp and show which his station in life enabled him to do. "Remember," he urged, "you are not among your equals, by whom unnecessary parade begins to be considered an ostentatious vulgarity. The surest method of dazzling our inferiors is by splendour, not taste. All young persons — all women in particular — are caught by show, and enamoured of magnificence. Assume a greater state, and you will be more talked of; and notoriety wins a woman's heart more than beauty or youth. You have, forgive me, played the boy too long; a certain dignity becomes your manhood; women will not respect you if you suffer yourself to become 'stale and cheap to vulgar company.' You are like a man who has fifty advantages, and uses only one of them to gain his point, when you rely on your conversation and your manner, and throw away the resources of your wealth and your station. Any private gentleman may be amiable and witty; but any private gentleman cannot call to his aid the Aladdin's lamp possessed in England by a wealthy peer. Look to this, my dear lord; Lucy at heart is vain, or she is not a woman. Dazzle her, then, — dazzle! Love may be blind, but it must be made so by excess of light. You have a country-house within a few miles of Bath. Why not take up your abode there instead of in a paltry lodging in the town? Give sumptuous entertainments, — make it necessary for all the world to attend them, — exclude, of course, this Captain Clifford; you will then meet Lucy without a rival. At present, excepting only your title, you fight on a level ground with this adventurer, instead of an eminence from which you could in an instant sweep him away. Nay, he is stronger than you; he has the opportunities afforded by a partnership in balls where you cannot appear to advantage; he is, you say, in the first bloom of youth, — he is handsome. Reflect! — your destiny, so far as Lucy is concerned, is in your hands. I turn to other subjects," etc.

As Brandon re-read, ere he signed, this last letter, a bitter smile sat on his harsh yet handsome features. "If," said he, mentally, "I can effect this object, — if Mauleverer does marry this girl, — why so much the better that she has another, a fairer, and a more welcome lover. By the great principle of scorn within me, which has enabled me to sneer at what weaker minds adore, and make a footstool of that worldly honour which fools set up as a throne, it would be to me more sweet than fame — ay, or even than power — to see this fine-spun lord a gibe in the mouths of men, — a cuckold, a cuckold!" and as he said the last word Brandon laughed outright. "And he thinks, too," added he, "that he is sure of my fortune; otherwise, perhaps, he, the goldsmith's descendant, would not dignify our house with his proposals; but he may err there, — he may err there;" and, finishing his soliloquy, Brandon finished also his letter by — "Adieu, my dear lord, your most affectionate friend"!

It is not difficult to conjecture the effect produced upon Lucy by Brandon's letter. It made her wretched; she refused for days to go out; she shut herself up in her apartment, and consumed the time in tears and struggles with her own heart. Sometimes what she conceived to be her duty conquered, and she resolved to forswear her lover; but the night undid the labour of the day, — for at night, every night, the sound of her lover's voice, accompanied by music, melted away her resolution, and made her once more all tenderness and trust. The words, too, sung under her window were especially suited to affect her; they breathed a melancholy which touched her the more from its harmony with her own thoughts. One while they complained of absence, at another they hinted at neglect; but there was always in them a tone of humiliation, not reproach; they bespoke a sense of unworthiness in the lover, and confessed that even the love was a crime: and in proportion as they owned the want of desert did Lucy more firmly cling to the belief that her lover was deserving.

The old squire was greatly disconcerted by his brother's letter. Though impressed with the idea of self-consequence,

and the love of tolerably pure blood, common to most country squires, he was by no means ambitious for his daughter. On the contrary, the same feeling which at Warlock had made him choose his companions among the inferior gentry made him averse to the thought of a son-in-law from the peerage. In spite of Mauleverer's good-nature, the very ease of the earl annoyed him, and he never felt at home in his society. To Clifford he had a great liking; and having convinced himself that there was nothing to suspect in the young gentleman, he saw no earthly reason why so agreeable a companion should not be an agreeable son-in-law. "If he be poor," thought the squire, "though he does not seem so, Lucy is rich!" And this truism appeared to him to answer every objection. Nevertheless, William Brandon possessed a remarkable influence over the weaker mind of his brother; and the squire, though with great reluctance, resolved to adopt his advice. He shut his doors against Clifford, and when he met him in the streets, instead of greeting him with his wonted cordiality, he passed him with a hasty "Good day, Captain!" which, after the first day or two, merged into a distant bow. Whenever very good-hearted people are rude, and unjustly so, the rudeness is in the extreme. The squire felt it so irksome to be less familiar than heretofore with Clifford, that his only remaining desire was now to drop him altogether; and to this consummation of acquaintance the gradually cooling salute appeared rapidly approaching. Meanwhile Clifford, unable to see Lucy, shunned by her father, and obtaining in answer to all inquiry rude looks from the footman, whom nothing but the most resolute command over his muscles prevented him from knocking down, began to feel perhaps, for the first time in his life, that an equivocal character is at least no equivocal misfortune. To add to his distress, "the earnings of his previous industry" — we use the expression cherished by the wise Tomlinson — waxed gradually less and less beneath the expenses of Bath; and the murmuring voices of his two comrades began already to reproach their chief for his inglorious idleness, and to hint at the necessity of a speedy exertion.

CHAPTER XX.

Whackum. Look you there, now! Well, all Europe cannot show a knot of finer wits and braver gentlemen.

Dingboy. Faith, they are pretty smart men.

SHADWELL: *Scourers.*

THE world of Bath was of a sudden delighted by the intelligence that Lord Mauleverer had gone to Beauvale (the beautiful seat possessed by that nobleman in the neighbourhood of Bath), with the intention of there holding a series of sumptuous entertainments.

The first persons to whom the gay earl announced his "hospitable purpose" were Mr. and Miss Brandon; he called at their house, and declared his resolution of not leaving it till Lucy (who was in her own room) consented to gratify him with an interview, and a promise to be the queen of his purposed festival. Lucy, teased by her father, descended to the drawing-room, spiritless and pale; and the earl, struck by the alteration of her appearance, took her hand, and made his inquiries with so interesting and feeling a semblance of kindness as prepossessed the father for the first time in his favour, and touched even the daughter. So earnest, too, was his request that she would honour his festivities with her presence, and with so skilful a flattery was it conveyed, that the squire undertook to promise the favour in her name; and when the earl, declaring he was not contented with that promise from another, appealed to Lucy herself, her denial was soon melted into a positive though a reluctant assent.

Delighted with his success, and more struck with Lucy's loveliness, refined as it was by her paleness, than he had ever been before, Mauleverer left the house, and calculated, with greater accuracy than he had hitherto done, the probable fortune Lucy would derive from her uncle.

No sooner were the cards issued for Lord Mauleverer's *fête* than nothing else was talked of among the circles which at Bath people were pleased to term "the World."

But in the interim caps are making, and talk flowing, at Bath; and when it was found that Lord Mauleverer—the good-natured Lord Mauleverer, the obliging Lord Mauleverer—was really going to be exclusive, and out of a thousand acquaintances to select only eight hundred, it is amazing how his popularity deepened into respect. Now, then, came anxiety and triumph; she who was asked turned her back upon her who was not,—old friendships dissolved,—Independence wrote letters for a ticket,—and, as England is the freest country in the world, all the Mistresses Hodges and Snodges begged to take the liberty of bringing their youngest daughters.

Leaving the enviable Mauleverer,—the god-like occasion of so much happiness and woe, triumph and dejection,—ascend with us, O reader, into those elegant apartments over the hairdresser's shop, tenanted by Mr. Edward Pepper and Mr. Augustus Tomlinson. The time was that of evening; Captain Clifford had been dining with his two friends; the cloth was removed, and conversation was flowing over a table graced by two bottles of port, a bowl of punch for Mr. Pepper's especial discussion, two dishes of filberts, another of devilled biscuits, and a fourth of three Pomarian crudities, which nobody touched.

The hearth was swept clean, the fire burned high and clear, the curtains were let down, and the light excluded. Our three adventurers and their rooms seemed the picture of comfort. So thought Mr. Pepper; for, glancing round the chamber and putting his feet upon the fender, he said, —

"Were my portrait to be taken, gentlemen, it is just as I am now that I would be drawn!"

"And," said Tomlinson, cracking his filberts, — Tomlinson was fond of filberts, — "were I to choose a home, it is in such a home as this that I would be always quartered."

"Ah, gentlemen," said Clifford, who had been for some time silent, "it is more than probable that both your wishes may



IN THE LODGINGS OF THE HIGHWAYMEN.

be heard, and that ye may be drawn, quartered, and something else, too, in the very place of your *desert*!"

"Well," said Tomlinson, smiling gently, "I am happy to hear you jest again, Captain, though it be at our expense."

"Expense!" echoed Ned; "ay, there's the rub! Who the deuce is to pay the expense of our dinner?"

"And our dinners for the last week?" added Tomlinson. "This empty nut looks ominous; it certainly has one grand feature strikingly resembling my pockets."

"Heigho!" sighed Long Ned, turning his waistcoat commodities inside-out with a significant gesture, while the accomplished Tomlinson, who was fond of plaintive poetry, pointed to the disconsolate vacua, and exclaimed,—

"E'en while Fashion's brightest arts decoy,
The heart desponding asks if *this* be joy!"

"In truth, gentlemen," added he, solemnly depositing his nut-crackers on the table, and laying, as was his wont when about to be luminous, his right finger on his sinister palm, — "in truth, gentlemen, affairs are growing serious with us, and it becomes necessary forthwith to devise some safe means of procuring a decent competence."

"I am dunned confoundedly," cried Ned.

"And," continued Tomlinson, "no person of delicacy likes to be subjected to the importunity of vulgar creditors; we must therefore raise money for the liquidation of our debts. Captain Lovett, or Clifford, whichever you be styled, we call upon you to assist us in so praiseworthy a purpose."

Clifford turned his eyes first on one and then on the other but made no answer.

"*Imprimis*," said Tomlinson, "let us each produce our stock in hand; for my part, I am free to confess — for what shame is there in that poverty which our exertions are about to relieve? — that I have only two guineas four shillings and threepence halfpenny!"

"And I," said Long Ned, taking a China ornament from the chimney-piece, and emptying its contents in his hand, "am in a still more pitiful condition. See, I have only three

shillings and a bad guinea. I gave the guinea to the waiter at the White Hart yesterday; the dog brought it back to me to-day, and I was forced to change it with my last shiner. Plague take the thing! I bought it of a Jew for four shillings, and have lost one pound five by the bargain."

"Fortune frustrates our wisest schemes," rejoined the moralizing Augustus. "Captain, will *you* produce the scanty wrecks of your wealth?"

Clifford, still silent, threw a purse on the table. Augustus carefully emptied it, and counted out five guineas; an expression of grave surprise settled on Tomlinson's contemplative brow, and extending the coins towards Clifford, he said in a melancholy tone, —

"All your pretty ones?
Did you say all?"

A look from Clifford answered the interesting interrogatory.

"These, then," said Tomlinson, collecting in his hand the common wealth, — "these, then, are all our remaining treasures!" As he spoke, he jingled the coins mournfully in his palm, and gazing upon them with a parental air, exclaimed, —

"Alas! regardless of their doom, the little victims play!"

"Oh, d— it!" said Ned, "no sentiment! Let us come to business at once. To tell you the truth, I, for one, am tired of this heiress-hunting, and a man may spend a fortune in the chase before he can win one."

"You despair then, positively, of the widow you have courted so long?" asked Tomlinson.

"Utterly," rejoined Ned, whose addresses had been limited solely to the dames of the middling class, and who had imagined himself at one time, as he punningly expressed it, sure of a *dear rib* from *Cheapside*, — "utterly; she was very civil to me at first, but when I proposed, asked me, with a blush, for my 'references.' 'References?' said I; 'why, I want the place of your husband, my charmer, not your footman!' The dame was inexorable, said she could not take me without a character, but hinted that I might be the lover instead of the bridegroom; and when I scorned the suggestion, and

pressed for the parson, she told me point-blank, with her unlucky city pronunciation, 'that she would never accompany me to the halter!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried Tomlinson, laughing. "One can scarcely blame the good lady for that. Love rarely brooks such permanent *ties*. But have you no other lady in your eye?"

"Not for matrimony, — all roads but those to the church!"

While this dissolute pair were thus conversing, Clifford, leaning against the wainscot, listened to them with a sick and bitter feeling of degradation, which till of late days had been a stranger to his breast. He was at length aroused from his silence by Ned, who, bending forward and placing his hand upon Clifford's knee, said abruptly, —

"In short, Captain, you must lead us once more to glory. We have still our horses, and I keep my mask in my pocket-book, together with my comb. Let us take the road to-morrow night, dash across the country towards Salisbury, and after a short visit in that neighbourhood to a band of old friends of mine, — bold fellows, who would have stopped the devil himself when he was at work upon Stonehenge, — make a tour by Reading and Henley and end by a plunge into London."

"You have spoken well, Ned!" said Tomlinson, approvingly. "Now, noble captain, your opinion?"

"Messieurs," answered Clifford, "I highly approve of your intended excursion, and I only regret that I cannot be your companion."

"Not! and why?" cried Mr. Pepper, amazed.

"Because I have business here that renders it impossible; perhaps, before long, I may join you in London."

"Nay," said Tomlinson, "there is no necessity for our going to London, if you wish to remain here; nor need we at present recur to so desperate an expedient as the road, — a little quiet business at Bath will answer our purpose; and for my part, as you well know, I love exerting my wits in some scheme more worthy of them than the highway, — a profession meet for a bully than a man of genius. Let us then, Captain, plan a project of enrichment on the property of some credulous

tradesman! Why have recourse to rough measures so long as we can find easy fools?"

Clifford shook his head. "I will own to you fairly," said he, "that I cannot at present take a share in your exploits; nay, as your chief I must lay my positive commands on you to refrain from all exercise of your talents at Bath. Rob, if you please: the world is before you; but this city is sacred."

"Body o' me!" cried Ned, colouring, "but this is too good. I will not be dictated to in this manner."

"But, sir," answered Clifford, who had learned in his oligarchical profession the way to command, — "but, sir, you shall, or if you mutiny you leave our body, and then will the hangman have no petty chance of your own. Come, come! ingrate as you are, what would you be without me? How many times have I already saved that long carcass of thine from the rope, and now would you have the baseness to rebel? Out on you!"

Though Mr. Pepper was still wroth, he bit his lip in moody silence, and suffered not his passion to have its way; while Clifford, rising, after a short pause continued: "Look you, Mr. Pepper, you know my commands; consider them peremptory. I wish you success and plenty! Farewell, gentlemen!"

"Do you leave us already?" cried Tomlinson. "You are offended."

"Surely not!" answered Clifford, retreating to the door. "But an engagement elsewhere, you know!"

"Ay, I take you," said Tomlinson, following Clifford out of the room, and shutting the door after him. "Ay, I take you!" added he, in a whisper, as he arrested Clifford at the head of the stairs. "But tell me, how do you get on with the heiress?"

Smothering that sensation at his heart which made Clifford, reckless as he was, enraged and ashamed, whenever through the lips of his comrades there issued any allusion to Lucy Brandon, the chief replied: "I fear, Tomlinson, that I am already suspected by the old squire! All of a sudden he avoids me, shuts his door against me; Miss Brandon goes

nowhere, and even if she did, what could I expect from her after this sudden change in the father?"

Tomlinson looked blank and disconcerted. "But," said he, after a moment's silence, "why not put a good face on the matter, walk up to the squire, and ask him the reason of his unkindness?"

"Why, look you, my friend; I am bold enough with all others, but this girl has made me as bashful as a maid in all that relates to herself. Nay, there are moments when I think I can conquer all selfish feeling and rejoice for her sake that she has escaped me. Could I but see her once more, I could — yes! I feel — I feel I could — resign her forever!"

"Humph!" said Tomlinson; "and what is to become of *us*? Really, my captain, your sense of duty should lead you to exert yourself; your friends starve before your eyes, while you are shilly-shallying about your mistress. Have you no bowels for friendship?"

"A truce with this nonsense!" said Clifford, angrily.

"It is sense, — sober sense, — and sadness too," rejoined Tomlinson. "Ned is discontented, our debts are imperious. Suppose, now, — just suppose, — that we take a moonlight flitting from Bath, will that tell well for you whom we leave behind? Yet this we must do, if you do not devise some method of refilling our purses. Either, then, consent to join us in a scheme meet for our wants, or pay our debts in this city, or fly with us to London, and dismiss all thoughts of that love which is so seldom friendly to the projects of ambition."

Notwithstanding the manner in which Tomlinson made this threefold proposition, Clifford could not but acknowledge the sense and justice contained in it; and a glance at the matter sufficed to show how ruinous to his character, and therefore to his hopes, would be the flight of his comrades and the clamour of their creditors.

"You speak well, Tomlinson," said he, hesitating; "and yet for the life of me I cannot aid you in any scheme which may disgrace us by detection. Nothing can reconcile me to the apprehension of Miss Brandon's discovering who and what was her suitor."

"I feel for you," said Tomlinson, "but give me and Pepper at least permission to shift for ourselves; trust to my known prudence for finding some method to raise the wind without creating a dust; in other words (this cursed Pepper makes one so vulgar!), of preying on the public without being discovered."

"I see no alternative," answered Clifford, reluctantly; "but if possible, be quiet for the present. Bear with me for a few days longer, give me only sufficient time once more to see Miss Brandon, and I will engage to extricate you from your difficulties!"

"Spoken like yourself, frankly and nobly," replied Tomlinson; "no one has a greater confidence in your genius, once exerted, than I have!"

So saying, the pair shook hands and parted. Tomlinson rejoined Mr. Pepper.

"Well, have you settled anything?" quoth the latter.

"Not exactly; and though Lovett has promised to exert himself in a few days, yet, as the poor man is in love, and his genius under a cloud, I have little faith in his promises."

"And I have none!" said Pepper; "besides, time presses! A few days!—a few devils! We are certainly scented here, and I walk about like a barrel of beer at Christmas, under hourly apprehension of being *tapped*!"

"It is very strange," said the philosophic Augustus; "but I think there is an instinct in tradesmen by which they can tell a rogue at first sight; and I can get (dress I ever so well) no more credit with my laundress than my friends the Whigs can with the people."

"In short, then," said Ned, "we must recur at once to the road; and on the day after to-morrow there will be an excellent opportunity. The old earl with the hard name gives a breakfast, or feast, or some such mummary. I understand people will stay till after nightfall; let us watch our opportunity, we are famously mounted, and some carriage later than the general string may furnish us with all our hearts can desire!"

"Bravo!" cried Tomlinson, shaking Mr. Pepper heartily

by the hand; "I give you joy of your ingenuity, and you may trust to me to make our peace afterwards with Lovett. Any enterprise that seems to him gallant he is always willing enough to forgive; and as he never practises any other branch of the profession than that of the road (for which I confess that I think him foolish), he will be more ready to look over our exploits in that line than in any other more subtle but less heroic."

"Well, I leave it to you to propitiate the cove or not, as you please; and now that we have settled the main point, let us finish the lush!"

"And," added Augustus, taking a pack of cards from the chimney-piece, "we can in the mean while have a quiet game at cribbage for shillings."

"Done!" cried Ned, clearing away the dessert.

If the redoubted hearts of Mr. Edward Pepper, and that Ulysses of robbers, Augustus Tomlinson, beat high as the hours brought on Lord Mauleverer's *fête*, their leader was not without anxiety and expectation for the same event. He was uninvited, it is true, to the gay scene; but he had heard in public that Miss Brandon, recovered from her late illness, was certainly to be there; and Clifford, torn with suspense, and eager once more, even if for the last time, to see the only person who had ever pierced his soul with a keen sense of his errors or crimes, resolved to risk all obstacles and meet her at Mauleverer's.

"My life," said he, as he sat alone in his apartment, eying the falling embers of his still and lethargic fire, "may soon approach its termination; it is, indeed, out of the chances of things that I can long escape the doom of my condition; and when, as a last hope to raise myself from my desperate state into respectability and reform, I came hither, and meditated purchasing independence by marriage, I was blind to the cursed rascality of the action! Happy, after all, that my intentions were directed against one whom I so soon and so adoringly learned to love! Had I wooed one whom I loved less, I might not have scrupled to deceive her into marriage. As it is, — well, it is idle in me to think thus of my resolu-

tion, when I have not even the option to choose; when her father, perhaps, has already lifted the veil from my assumed dignities, and the daughter already shrinks in horror from my name. Yet I will see her! I will look once more upon that angel face, I will hear from her own lips the confession of her scorn, I will see that bright eye flash hatred upon me, and I can then turn once more to my fatal career, and forget that I have ever repented that it was begun. Yet, what else could have been my alternative? Friendless, homeless, nameless, — an orphan, worse than an orphan, — the son of a harlot, my father even unknown; yet cursed with early aspirations and restlessness, and a half glimmering of knowledge, and an entire lust of whatever seemed enterprise, — what wonder that I chose anything rather than daily labour and perpetual contumely? After all, the fault is in fortune and the world, not me! Oh, Lucy! had I but been born in your sphere, had I but possessed the claim to merit you, what would I not have done and dared and conquered for your sake!”

Such, or similar to these, were the thoughts of Clifford during the interval between his resolution of seeing Lucy and the time of effecting it. The thoughts were of no pleasing though of an exciting nature; nor were they greatly soothed by the ingenious occupation of cheating himself into the belief that if he was a highwayman, it was altogether the fault of the highways.

CHAPTER XXI.

Dream. Let me but see her, dear Leontius.

Humorous Lieutenant.

Hempskirke. It was the fellow, sure.

Wolfort. What are you, sirrah?

Beggar's Bush.

O THOU divine spirit that burnest in every breast, inciting each with the sublime desire to be *fine*; that stirrest up the great to become little in order to seem greater, and that makest

a duchess woo insult for a voucher, — thou that delightest in so many shapes, multifarious yet the same; spirit that makest the high despicable, and the lord meaner than his valet; equally great whether thou cheatest a friend or cuttest a father; lacquering all thou touchest with a bright vulgarity that thy votaries imagine to be gold, — thou that sendest the few to fashionable balls and the many to fashionable novels; that smitest even Genius as well as Folly, making the favourites of the gods boast an acquaintance they have not with the graces of a mushroom peerage rather than the knowledge they have of the Muses of an eternal Helicon, — thou that leavest in the great ocean of our manners no dry spot for the foot of independence; that palest on the jaded eye with a moving and girdling panorama of daubed vilenesses, and fritterest away the souls of free-born Britons into a powder smaller than the angels which dance in myriads on a pin's point, — whether, O spirit! thou callest thyself Fashion or *Ton* or Ambition or Vanity or Cringing or Cant or any title equally lofty and sublime, — would that from thy wings we could gain but a single plume! Fain would we, in fitting strain, describe the festivities of that memorable day when the benevolent Lord Mauleverer received and blessed the admiring universe of Bath.

But to be less poetical, as certain writers say, when they have been writing nonsense, — but to be less poetical and more exact, the morning, though in the depth of winter, was bright and clear, and Lord Mauleverer found himself in particularly good health. Nothing could be better planned than the whole of his arrangements. Unlike those which are ordinarily chosen for the express reason of being as foreign as possible to the nature of our climate, all at Lord Mauleverer's were made suitable to a Greenland atmosphere. The temples and summer-houses, interspersed through the grounds, were fitted up, some as Esquimaux huts, others as Russian pavilions; fires were carefully kept up; the musicians Mauleverer took care should have as much wine as they pleased; they were set skilfully in places where they were unseen, but where they could be heard. One or two temporary buildings were erected for those who loved dancing; and as Mauleverer, mis-

calculating on the principles of human nature, thought *gentlemen* might be averse from ostentatious exhibition, he had hired persons to skate minuets and figures of eight upon his lakes, for the amusement of those who were fond of skating. All people who would be kind enough to dress in strange costumes and make odd noises, which they called singing, the earl had carefully engaged, and planted in the best places for making them look still stranger than they were.

There was also plenty to eat, and more than plenty to drink. Mauleverer knew well that our countrymen and countrywomen, whatever be their rank, like to have their spirits exalted. In short, the whole *déjeûner* was so admirably contrived that it was probable the guests would not look much more melancholy during the amusements than they would have done had they been otherwise engaged at a funeral.

Lucy and the squire were among the first arrivals.

Mauleverer, approaching the father and daughter with his most courtly manner, insisted on taking the latter under his own escort, and being her cicerone through the round of preparations.

As the crowd thickened, and it was observed how gallant were the attentions testified towards Lucy by the host, many and envious were the whispers of the guests! Those good people, naturally angry at the thought that two individuals should be married, divided themselves into two parties: one abused Lucy, and the other Lord Mauleverer; the former vituperated *her* art, the latter *his* folly. "I thought she would play her cards well, deceitful creature!" said the one. "January and May," muttered the other; "the man's sixty!" It was noticeable that the party against Lucy was chiefly composed of ladies, that against Mauleverer of men; that conduct must indeed be heinous which draws down the indignation of one's own sex!

Unconscious of her crimes, Lucy moved along, leaning on the arm of the gallant earl, and languidly smiling, with her heart far away, at his endeavours to amuse her. There was something interesting in the mere contrast of the pair; so touching seemed the beauty of the young girl, with her deli-

cate cheek, maiden form, drooping eyelid, and quiet simplicity of air, in comparison to the worldly countenance and artificial grace of her companion.

After some time, when they were in a sequestered part of the grounds, Mauleverer, observing that none were near, entered a rude hut; and so fascinated was he at that moment by the beauty of his guest, and so meet to him seemed the opportunity of his confession, that he with difficulty suppressed the avowal rising to his lips, and took the more prudent plan of first sounding and preparing as it were the way.

"I cannot tell you, my dear Miss Brandon," said he, slightly pressing the beautiful hand leaning on his arm, "how happy I am to see you the guest—the queen, rather—of my house! Ah! could the bloom of youth return with its feelings! Time is never so cruel as when, while stealing from us the power to please, he leaves us in full vigour the unhappy privilege to be charmed!"

Mauleverer expected at least a blushing contradiction to the implied application of a sentiment so affectingly expressed: he was disappointed. Lucy, less alive than usual to the sentimental, or its reverse, scarcely perceived his meaning, and answered simply that it was very true. "This comes of being, like my friend Burke, too refined for one's audience," thought Mauleverer, wincing a little from the unexpected reply. "And yet!" he resumed, "I would not forego my power to admire, futile, nay, painful as it is. Even now, while I gaze on you, my heart tells me that the pleasure I enjoy, it is at your command at once and forever to blight into misery; but while it tells me, I gaze on!"

Lucy raised her eyes, and something of her natural archness played in their expression.

"I believe, my lord," said she, moving from the hut, "that it would be better to join your guests: walls have ears; and what would be the gay Lord Mauleverer's self-reproach if he heard again of his fine compliments to—"

"The most charming person in Europe!" cried Mauleverer, vehemently; and the hand which he before touched he now clasped. At that instant Lucy saw opposite to her, half hid

by a copse of evergreens, the figure of Clifford. His face, which seemed pale and wan, was not directed towards the place where she stood, and he evidently did not perceive Mauleverer or herself; yet so great was the effect that this glimpse of him produced on Lucy, that she trembled violently, and, unconsciously uttering a faint cry, snatched her hand from Mauleverer.

The earl started, and catching the expression of her eyes, turned instantly towards the spot to which her gaze seemed riveted. He had not heard the rustling of the boughs, but he saw, with his habitual quickness of remark, that they still trembled, as if lately displaced; and he caught through their interstices the glimpse of a receding figure. He sprang forward with an agility very uncommon to his usual movements; but before he gained the copse, every vestige of the intruder had vanished.

What slaves we are to the moment! As Mauleverer turned back to rejoin Lucy, who, agitated almost to fainting, leaned against the rude wall of the hut, he would as soon have thought of flying as of making that generous offer of self, etc., which the instant before he had been burning to render Lucy. The vain are always sensitively jealous; and Mauleverer, remembering Clifford, and Lucy's blushes in dancing with him, instantly accounted for her agitation and its cause. With a very grave air he approached the object of his late adoration, and requested to know if it were not some abrupt intruder that had occasioned her alarm. Lucy, scarcely knowing what she said, answered in a low voice that it was, indeed, and begged instantly to rejoin her father. Mauleverer offered his arm with great dignity; and the pair passed into the frequented part of the grounds, where Mauleverer once more brightened into smiles and courtesy to all around him.

"He is certainly accepted!" said Mr. Shrewd to Lady Simper.

"What an immense match for the girl!" was Lady Simper's reply.

Amidst the music, the dancing, the throng, the noise, Lucy found it easy to recover herself; and disengaging her arm

from Lord Mauleverer, as she perceived her father, she rejoined the squire, and remained a patient listener to his remarks till late in the noon it became an understood matter that people were expected to go into a long room in order to eat and drink. Mauleverer, now alive to the duties of his situation, and feeling exceedingly angry with Lucy, was more reconciled than he otherwise might have been to the etiquette which obliged him to select for the object of his hospitable cares an old dowager duchess instead of the beauty of the *fête*; but he took care to point out to the squire the places appointed for himself and daughter, which were, though at some distance from the earl, under the providence of his vigilant survey.

While Mauleverer was deifying the dowager duchess, and refreshing his spirits with a chicken and a medicinal glass of madeira, the conversation near Lucy turned, to her infinite dismay, upon Clifford. Some one had seen him in the grounds, booted and in a riding undress (in *that* day people seldom rode and danced in the same conformation of coat); and as Mauleverer was a precise person about those little matters of etiquette, this negligence of Clifford's made quite a subject of discussion. By degrees the conversation changed into the old inquiry as to who this Captain Clifford was; and just as it had reached that point, it reached also the gently deafened ears of Lord Mauleverer.

"Pray, my lord," said the old duchess, "since he is one of your guests, you, who know who and what every one is, can possibly inform us of the real family of this beautiful Mr. Clifford?"

"One of my guests, did you say?" answered Mauleverer, irritated greatly beyond his usual quietness of manner. "Really, your grace does me wrong. He may be a guest of my valet, but he assuredly is not mine; and should I encounter him, I shall leave it to my valet to give him his *congé* as well as his invitation!"

Mauleverer, heightening his voice as he observed athwart the table an alternate paleness and flush upon Lucy's face, which stung all the angrier passions, generally torpid in him.

into venom, looked round, on concluding, with a haughty and sarcastic air. So loud had been his tone, so pointed the insult, and so dead the silence at the table while he spoke, that every one felt the affront must be carried at once to Clifford's hearing, should he be in the room. And after Mauleverer had ceased, there was a universal nervous and indistinct expectation of an answer and a scene; all was still, and it soon became certain that Clifford was not in the apartment. When Mr. Shrewd had fully convinced himself of this fact, — for there was a daring spirit about Clifford which few wished to draw upon themselves, — that personage broke the pause by observing that no man who pretended to be a gentleman would intrude himself, unasked and unwelcome, into any society; and Mauleverer, catching up the observation, said (drinking wine at the same time with Mr. Shrewd) that undoubtedly such conduct fully justified the rumours respecting Mr. Clifford, and utterly excluded him from that rank to which it was before more than suspected he had no claim.

So luminous and satisfactory an opinion from such an authority, once broached, was immediately and universally echoed; and long before the repast was over, it seemed to be tacitly agreed that Captain Clifford should be sent to Coventry, and if he murmured at the exile, he would have no right to insist upon being sent thence to the devil.

The good old squire, mindful of his former friendship for Clifford, and not apt to veer, was about to begin a speech on the occasion, when Lucy, touching his arm, implored him to be silent; and so ghastly was the paleness of her cheek while she spoke, that the squire's eyes, obtuse as he generally was, opened at once to the real secret of her heart. As soon as the truth flashed upon him, he wondered, recalling Clifford's great personal beauty and marked attentions, that it had not flashed upon him sooner; and leaning back on his chair, he sank into one of the most unpleasant reveries he had ever conceived.

At a given signal the music for the dancers recommenced, and at a hint to that effect from the host, persons rose without ceremony to repair to other amusements, and suffer such guests as had hitherto been excluded from eating to occupy the place

of the relinquishers. Lucy, glad to escape, was one of the first to resign her situation, and with the squire she returned to the grounds. During the banquet, evening had closed in, and the scene now really became fairy-like and picturesque; lamps hung from many a tree, reflecting the light through the richest and softest hues; the music itself sounded more musically than during the day; gipsy-tents were pitched at wild corners and copses, and the bright wood-fires burning in them blazed merrily upon the cold yet cheerful air of the increasing night. The view was really novel and inviting; and as it had been an understood matter that ladies were to bring furs, cloaks, and boots, all those who thought they looked well in such array made little groups, and scattered themselves about the grounds and in the tents. They, on the contrary, in whom "the purple light of love" was apt by the frost to be propelled from the cheeks to the central ornament of the face, or who thought a fire in a room quite as agreeable as a fire in a tent, remained within, and contemplated the scene through the open windows.

Lucy longed to return home, nor was the squire reluctant; but, unhappily, it wanted an hour to the time at which the carriage had been ordered, and she mechanically joined a group of guests who had persuaded the good-natured squire to forget his gout and venture forth to look at the illuminations. Her party was soon joined by others, and the group gradually thickened into a crowd; the throng was stationary for a few minutes before a little temple in which fireworks had just commenced an additional attraction to the scene. Opposite to this temple, as well as in its rear, the walks and trees had been purposely left in comparative darkness, in order to heighten the effect of the fireworks.

"I declare," said Lady Simper, glancing down one of the alleys which seemed to stretch away into blackness, — "I declare it seems quite a lovers' walk. How kind in Lord Mauleverer! — such a delicate attention —"

"To your ladyship!" added Mr. Shrewd, with a bow.

While, one of this crowd, Lucy was vacantly eying the long trains of light which ever and anon shot against the sky, she

felt her hand suddenly seized, and at the same time a voice whispered, "For God's sake, read this now and grant my request!"

The voice, which seemed to rise from the very heart of the speaker, Lucy knew at once; she trembled violently, and remained for some minutes with eyes which did not dare to look from the ground. A note she felt had been left in her hand; and the agonized and earnest tone of that voice, which was dearer to her than the fulness of all music, made her impatient yet afraid to read it. As she recovered courage, she looked around, and seeing that the attention of all was bent upon the fireworks, and that her father in particular, leaning on his cane, seemed to enjoy the spectacle with a child's engrossed delight, she glided softly away, and entering unperceived one of the alleys, she read, by a solitary lamp that burned at its entrance, the following lines, written in pencil and in a hurried hand, apparently upon a leaf torn from a pocket-book:—

I implore, I entreat you, Miss Brandon, to see me, if but for a moment. I purpose to tear myself away from the place in which you reside, to go abroad, to leave even the spot hallowed by your footstep. After this night my presence, my presumption, will degrade you no more. But this night, for mercy's sake, see me, or I shall go mad! I will but speak to you one instant: this is all I ask. If you grant me this prayer, the walk to the left where you stand, at the entrance to which there is one purple lamp, will afford an opportunity to your mercy. A few yards down that walk I will meet you, — none can see or hear us. Will you grant this? I know not, I dare not think; but under any case, your name shall be the last upon my lips.

P. C.

As Lucy read this hurried scrawl, she glanced towards the lamp above her, and saw that she had accidentally entered the very walk indicated in the note. She paused, she hesitated; the impropriety, the singularity of the request, darted upon her at once; on the other hand, the anxious voice still ringing in her ear, the incoherent vehemence of the note, the risk, the opprobrium Clifford had incurred solely — her heart whispered — to see her, all aided her simple temper, her kind

feelings, and her love for the petitioner, in inducing her to consent. She cast one glance behind, — all seemed occupied with far other thoughts than that of notice towards her; she looked anxiously before, — all looked gloomy and indistinct; but suddenly, at some little distance, she descried a dark figure in motion. She felt her knees shake under her, her heart beat violently; she moved onward a few paces, again paused, and looked back. The figure before her moved as in approach; she resumed courage, and advanced, — the figure was by her side.

“How generous, how condescending, is this goodness in Miss Brandon!” said the voice, which so struggled with secret and strong emotion that Lucy scarcely recognized it as Clifford’s. “I did not dare to expect it; and now — now that I meet you —” Clifford paused, as if seeking words; and Lucy, even through the dark, perceived that her strange companion was powerfully excited; she waited for him to continue, but observing that he walked on in silence, she said, though with a trembling voice, “Indeed, Mr. Clifford, I fear that it is very, very improper in me to meet you thus; nothing but the strong expressions in your letter — and — and — in short, my fear that you meditated some desperate design, at which I could not guess, caused me to yield to your wish for an interview.” She paused, and Clifford still preserving silence, she added, with some little coldness in her tone: “If you have really aught to say to me, you must allow me to request that you speak it quickly. This interview, you must be sensible, ought to end almost as soon as it begins.”

“Hear me, then!” said Clifford, mastering his embarrassment and speaking in a firm and clear voice; “is that true which I have but just heard, — is it true that I have been spoken of in your presence in terms of insult and affront?”

It was now for Lucy to feel embarrassed; fearful to give pain, and yet anxious that Clifford should know, in order that he might disprove, the slight and the suspicion which the mystery around him drew upon his name, she faltered between the two feelings, and without satisfying the latter, succeeded in realizing the fear of the former.

"Enough!" said Clifford, in a tone of deep mortification, as his quick ear caught and interpreted, yet more humiliatingly than the truth, the meaning of her stammered and confused reply, — "enough! I see that it is true, and that the only human being in the world to whose good opinion I am not indifferent has been a witness of the insulting manner in which others have dared to speak of me!"

"But," said Lucy, eagerly, "why give the envious or the idle any excuse? Why not suffer your parentage and family to be publicly known? Why are you here" — and her voice sank into a lower key — "this very day, unasked, and therefore subject to the cavils of all who think the poor distinction of an invitation an honour? Forgive me, Mr. Clifford; perhaps I offend. I hurt you by speaking thus frankly; but your good name rests with yourself, and your friends cannot but feel angry that you should trifle with it."

"Madam," said Clifford; and Lucy's eyes, now growing accustomed to the darkness, perceived a bitter smile upon his lips, "my name, good or ill, is an object of little care to me. I have read of philosophers who pride themselves in placing no value in the opinions of the world. Rank me among that sect. But I am — I own I am — anxious that you alone, of all the world, should not despise me; and now that I feel you do, that you must, everything worth living or hoping for is past!"

"Despise you!" said Lucy, and her eyes filled with tears; "indeed you wrong me and yourself. But listen to me, Mr. Clifford. I have seen, it is true, but little of the world, yet I have seen enough to make me wish I could have lived in retirement forever. The rarest quality among either sex, though it is the simplest, seems to me good-nature; and the only occupation of what are termed 'fashionable people' appears to be speaking ill of one another. Nothing gives such a scope to scandal as mystery; nothing disarms it like openness. I know, your friends know, Mr. Clifford, that your character can bear inspection; and I believe, for my own part, the same of your family. Why not, then, declare who and what you are?"

"That candour would indeed be my best defender," said Clifford, in a tone which ran displeasingly through Lucy's ear; "but in truth, madam, I repeat, I care not one drop of this worthless blood what men say of me: that time has passed, and forever; perhaps it never keenly existed for me, — no matter. I came hither, Miss Brandon, not wasting a thought on these sickening fooleries, or on the hoary idler by whom they are given. I came hither only once more to see you, to hear you speak, to watch you move, to tell you" — and the speaker's voice trembled, so as to be scarcely audible — "to tell you, if any reason for the disclosure offered itself, that I have had the boldness, the crime, to love — to love — O God! to adore you; and then to leave you forever!"

Pale, trembling, scarcely preserved from falling by the tree against which she leaned, Lucy listened to this abrupt avowal.

"Dare I touch this hand?" continued Clifford, as he knelt and took it timidly and reverently. "You know not, you cannot dream, how unworthy is he who thus presumes; yet not all unworthy, while he is sensible of so deep, so holy a feeling as that which he bears to you. God bless you, Miss Brandon! — Lucy, God bless you! And if hereafter you hear me subjected to still blacker suspicion or severer scrutiny than that which I now sustain; if even your charity and goodness can find no defence for me; if the suspicion become certainty, and the scrutiny end in condemnation, — believe at least that circumstances have carried me beyond my nature, and that under fairer auspices I might have been other than I am!"

Lucy's tear dropped upon Clifford's hand as he spoke; and while his heart melted within him as he felt it and knew his own desperate and unredeemed condition, he added, —

"Every one courts you, — the proud, the rich, the young, the high-born, — all are at your feet! You will select one of that number for your husband; may he watch over you as I would have done! — love you as I do he *cannot*! Yes, I repeat it," continued Clifford, vehemently, — "he *cannot*! None amidst the gay, happy, silken crowd of your equals and followers *can* feel for you that single and overruling passion which makes you to me what all combined — country, power,

wealth, reputation, an honest name, peace, common safety, the quiet of the common air, alike the least blessing and the greatest — are to all others! Once more, may God in heaven watch over you and preserve you! I tear myself, on leaving you, from all that cheers or blesses or raises or might have saved me! Farewell!”

The hand which Lucy had relinquished to her strange suitor was pressed ardently to his lips, dropped in the same instant, and she knew that she was once more alone.

But Clifford, hurrying rapidly through the trees, made his way towards the nearest gate which led from Lord Mauleverer's domain; when he reached it, a crowd of the more elderly guests occupied the entrance, and one of these was a lady of such distinction that Mauleverer, in spite of his aversion to any superfluous exposure to the night air, had obliged himself to conduct her to her carriage. He was in a very ill humour with this constrained politeness, especially as the carriage was very slow in relieving him of his charge, when he saw, by the lamplight, Clifford passing near him, and winning his way to the gate. Quite forgetting his worldly prudence, which should have made him averse to scenes with any one, especially with a flying enemy, and a man with whom, if he believed aright, little glory was to be gained in conquest, much less in contest; and only remembering Clifford's rivalry, and his own hatred towards him for the presumption, Mauleverer, uttering a hurried apology to the lady on his arm, stepped forward, and opposing Clifford's progress, said, with a bow of tranquil insult, “Pardon me, sir, but is it at *my* invitation or that of one of my servants that you have honoured me with your company this day?”

Clifford's thoughts at the time of this interruption were of that nature before which all petty misfortunes shrink into nothing; if, therefore, he started for a moment at the earl's address, he betrayed no embarrassment in reply, but bowing with an air of respect, and taking no notice of the affront implied in Mauleverer's speech, he answered, —

“Your lordship has only to deign a glance at my dress to see that I have not intruded myself on your grounds with the

intention of claiming your hospitality. The fact is, and I trust to your lordship's courtesy to admit the excuse, that I leave this neighbourhood to-morrow, and for some length of time. A person whom I was very anxious to see before I left was one of your lordship's guests; I heard this, and knew that I should have no other opportunity of meeting the person in question before my departure; and I must now throw myself on the well-known politeness of Lord Mauleverer to pardon a freedom originating in a business very much approaching to a necessity."

Lord Mauleverer's address to Clifford had congregated an immediate crowd of eager and expectant listeners; but so quietly respectful and really gentlemanlike were Clifford's air and tone in excusing himself, that the whole throng were smitten with a sudden disappointment.

Lord Mauleverer himself, surprised by the temper and deportment of the unbidden guest, was at a loss for one moment; and Clifford was about to take advantage of that moment and glide away, when Mauleverer, with a second bow, more civil than the former one, said, —

"I cannot but be happy, sir, that my poor place has afforded you any convenience; but if I am not very impertinent, will you allow me to inquire the name of my guest with whom you required a meeting?"

"My lord," said Clifford, drawing himself up and speaking gravely and sternly, though still with a certain deference, "I need not surely point out to your lordship's good sense and good feeling that your very question implies a doubt, and consequently an affront, and that the tone of it is not such as to justify that concession on my part which the further explanation you require would imply!"

Few spoken sarcasms could be so bitter as that silent one which Mauleverer could command by a smile, and with this complimentary expression on his thin lips and raised brow, the earl answered: "Sir, I honour the skill testified by your reply; it must be the result of a profound experience in these affairs. I wish you, sir, a very good night; and the next time you favour me with a visit, I am quite sure that your motives

for so indulging me will be no less creditable to you than at present."

With these words Mauleverer turned to rejoin his fair charge. But Clifford was a man who had seen in a short time a great deal of the world, and knew tolerably well the theories of society, if not the practice of its minutiae; moreover, he was of an acute and resolute temper, and these properties of mind, natural and acquired, told him that he was now in a situation in which it had become more necessary to defy than to conciliate. Instead therefore of retiring he walked deliberately up to Mauleverer, and said, —

"My lord, I shall leave it to the judgment of your guests to decide whether you have acted the part of a nobleman and a gentleman in thus, in your domains, insulting one who has given you such explanation of his trespass as would fully excuse him in the eyes of all considerate or courteous persons. I shall also leave it to them to decide whether the tone of your inquiry allowed me to give you any further apology. But I shall take it upon *myself*, my lord, to demand from *you* an immediate explanation of your last speech."

"Insolent!" cried Mauleverer, colouring with indignation, and almost for the first time in his life losing absolute command over his temper; "do you bandy words with me? Begone, or I shall order my servants to thrust you forth!"

"Begone, sir! begone!" cried several voices in echo to Mauleverer, from those persons who deemed it now high time to take part with the powerful.

Clifford stood his ground, gazing around with a look of angry and defying contempt, which, joined to his athletic frame, his dark and fierce eye, and a heavy riding-whip, which, as if mechanically, he half raised, effectually kept the murmurers from proceeding to violence.

"Poor pretender to breeding and to sense!" said he, disdainfully turning to Mauleverer; "with one touch of this whip I could shame you forever, or compel you to descend from the level of your rank to that of mine, and the action would be but a mild return to your language. But I love rather to teach you than to correct. According to my creed,

my lord, he conquers most in good breeding who forbears the most, — *scorn* enables *me* to forbear! Adieu!”

With this, Clifford turned on his heel and strode away. A murmur, approaching to a groan, from the younger or sillier part of the parasites (the mature and the sensible have no extra emotion to throw away), followed him as he disappeared.

CHAPTER XXII.

Outlaw. Stand, sir, and throw us that you have about you!

Val. Ruffians, forego that rude, uncivil touch!

The Two Gentlemen of Verona.

ON leaving the scene in which he had been so unwelcome a guest, Clifford hastened to the little inn where he had left his horse. He mounted and returned to Bath. His thoughts were absent, and he unconsciously suffered the horse to direct its course whither it pleased. This was naturally towards the nearest halting-place which the animal remembered; and this halting-place was at that illustrious tavern, in the suburbs of the town, in which we have before commemorated Clifford's re-election to the dignity of chief. It was a house of long-established reputation; and here news of any of the absent confederates was always to be obtained. This circumstance, added to the excellence of its drink, its ease, and the electric chain of early habits, rendered it a favourite haunt, even despite their present gay and modish pursuits, with Tomlinson and Pepper; and here, when Clifford sought the pair at unseasonable hours, was he for the most part sure to find them. As his meditations were interrupted by the sudden stopping of his horse beneath the well-known sign, Clifford, muttering an angry malediction on the animal, spurred it onward in the direction of his own home. He had already reached the end of the street, when his resolution seemed to change, and muttering to himself, “Ay, I might as well arrange this very night for our departure!” he turned

his horse's head backward, and was once more at the tavern door. He threw the bridle over an iron railing, and knocking with a peculiar sound at the door, was soon admitted.

"Are — and — here?" asked he of the old woman, as he entered, mentioning the cant words by which, among friends, Tomlinson and Pepper were usually known.

"They are both gone on the sharps to-night," replied the old lady, lifting her unsnuffed candle to the face of the speaker with an intelligent look; Oliver¹ is sleepy, and the lads will take advantage of his nap."

"Do you mean," answered Clifford, replying in the same key, which we take the liberty to paraphrase, "that they are out on any actual expedition?"

"To be sure," rejoined the dame. "They who lag late on the road may want money for supper!"

"Ha! which road?"

"You are a pretty fellow for captain!" rejoined the dame, with a good-natured sarcasm in her tone. "Why, Captain Gloak, poor fellow! knew every turn of his men to a hair, and never needed to ask what they were about. Ah, he *was* a fellow! none of your girl-faced mudgers, who make love to ladies, forsooth, — a pretty woman need not look far for a kiss when he was in the room, I warrant, however coarse her duds might be; and lauk! but the captain was a sensible man, and liked a cow as well as a calf."

"So, so! on the road, are they?" cried Clifford, musingly, and without heeding the insinuated attack on his decorum. "But answer me, what is the plan? Be quick!"

"Why," replied the dame, "there's some swell cove of a lord gives a blow-out to-day; and the lads, dear souls! think to play the queer on some straggler."

Without uttering a word, Clifford darted from the house, and was remounted before the old lady had time to recover her surprise.

"If you want to see them," cried she, as he put spurs to his horse, "they ordered me to have supper ready at —" The horse's hoofs drowned the last words of the dame; and care-

¹ The moon.

fully rebolting the door, and muttering an invidious comparison between Captain Clifford and Captain Gloak, the good landlady returned to those culinary operations destined to rejoice the hearts of Tomlinson and Pepper.

Return we ourselves to Lucy. It so happened that the squire's carriage was the last to arrive; for the coachman, long uninitiated among the shades of Warlock into the dissipation of fashionable life, entered on his *début* at Bath, with all the vigorous heat of matured passions for the first time released, into the festivities of the ale-house, and having a milder master than most of his comrades, the fear of displeasure was less strong in his aurigal bosom than the love of companionship; so that during the time this gentleman was amusing himself, Lucy had ample leisure for enjoying all the thousand-and-one reports of the scene between Mauleverer and Clifford which regaled her ears. Nevertheless, whatever might have been her feelings at these pleasing recitals, a certain vague joy predominated over all. A man feels but slight comparative happiness in being loved, if he know that it is in vain; but to a woman that simple knowledge is sufficient to destroy the memory of a thousand distresses, and it is not till she has told her heart again and again that she is loved, that she will even begin to ask if it be in vain.

It was a partially starlight yet a dim and obscure night, for the moon had for the last hour or two been surrounded by mist and cloud, when at length the carriage arrived; and Mauleverer, for the second time that evening playing the escort, conducted Lucy to the vehicle. Anxious to learn if she had seen or been addressed by Clifford, the subtle earl, as he led her to the gate, dwelt particularly on the intrusion of that person, and by the trembling of the hand which rested on his arm, he drew no delicious omen for his own hopes. "However," thought he, "the man goes to-morrow, and then the field will be clear; the girl's a child yet, and I forgive her folly." And with an air of chivalric veneration, Mauleverer bowed the object of his pardon into her carriage.

As soon as Lucy felt herself alone with her father, the emotions so long pent within her forced themselves into vent,

and leaning back against the carriage, she wept, though in silence, tears, burning tears, of sorrow, comfort, agitation, anxiety.

The good old squire was slow in perceiving his daughter's emotion; it would have escaped him altogether, if, actuated by a kindly warming of the heart towards her, originating in his new suspicion of her love for Clifford, he had not put his arm round her neck; and this unexpected caress so entirely unstrung her nerves that Lucy at once threw herself upon her father's breast, and her weeping, hitherto so quiet, became distinct and audible.

"Be comforted, my dear, dear child!" said the squire, almost affected to tears himself; and his emotion, arousing him from his usual mental confusion, rendered his words less involved and equivocal than they were wont to be. "And now I do hope that you won't vex yourself; the young man is indeed—and, I do assure you, I always thought so—a very charming gentleman, there's no denying it. But what can we do? You see what they all say of him, and it really was—we must allow that—very improper in him to come without being asked. Moreover, my dearest child, it is very wrong, very wrong indeed, to love any one, and not know who he is; and—and—but don't cry, my dear love, don't cry so; all will be very well, I am sure, — quite sure!"

As he said this, the kind old man drew his daughter nearer him, and feeling his hand hurt by something she wore unseen which pressed against it, he inquired, with some suspicion that the love might have proceeded to love-gifts, what it was.

"It is my mother's picture," said Lucy, simply, and putting it aside.

The old squire had loved his wife tenderly; and when Lucy made this reply, all the fond and warm recollections of his youth rushed upon him. He thought, too, how earnestly on her death-bed that wife had recommended to his vigilant care their only child now weeping on his bosom: he remembered how, dwelling on that which to all women seems the grand epoch of life, she had said, "Never let her affections be trifled with, — never be persuaded by your ambitious brother to make

her marry where she loves not, or to oppose her, without strong reason, where she does: though she be but a child now, I know enough of her to feel convinced that if ever she love, she will love too well for her own happiness, even with all things in her favour." These words, these recollections, joined to the remembrance of the cold-hearted scheme of William Brandon, which he had allowed himself to favour, and of his own supineness towards Lucy's growing love for Clifford, till resistance became at once necessary and too late, all smote him with a remorseful sorrow, and fairly sobbing himself, he said, "Thy mother, child! ah, would that she were living, she would never have neglected thee as I have done!"

The squire's self-reproach made Lucy's tears cease on the instant; and as she covered her father's hands with kisses, she replied only by vehement accusations against herself, and praises of his too great fatherly fondness and affection. This little burst, on both sides, of honest and simple-hearted love ended in a silence full of tender and mingled thoughts; and as Lucy still clung to the breast of the old man, uncouth as he was in temper, below even mediocrity in intellect, and altogether the last person in age or mind or habit that seemed fit for a confidant in the love of a young and enthusiastic girl, she felt the old homely truth that under all disadvantages there are, in this hollow world, few in whom trust can be so safely reposed, few who so delicately and subtly respect the confidence, as those from whom we spring.

The father and daughter had been silent for some minutes, and the former was about to speak, when the carriage suddenly stopped. The squire heard a rough voice at the horses' heads; he looked forth from the window to see, through the mist of the night, what could possibly be the matter, and he encountered in this action, just one inch from his forehead, the protruded and shining barrel of a horse-pistol. We may believe, without a reflection on his courage, that Mr. Brandon threw himself back into his carriage with all possible despatch; and at the same moment the door was opened, and a voice said, not in a threatening but a smooth accent, —

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am sorry to disturb you, but want is imperious; oblige me with your money, your watches, your rings, and any other little commodities of a similar nature!"

So delicate a request the squire had not the heart to resist, the more especially as he knew himself without any weapons of defence; accordingly he drew out a purse, not very full, it must be owned, — together with an immense silver hunting-watch, with a piece of black ribbon attached to it.

"There, sir," said he, with a groan, "don't frighten the young lady."

The gentle applicant, who indeed was no other than the specious Augustus Tomlinson, slid the purse into his waist-coat-pocket, after feeling its contents with a rapid and scientific finger.

"Your watch, sir," quoth he, — and as he spoke he thrust it carelessly into his coat-pocket, as a school-boy would thrust a peg-top, — "is heavy; but trusting to experience, since an accurate survey is denied me, I fear it is more valuable from its weight than its workmanship: however, I will not wound your vanity by affecting to be fastidious. But surely the young lady, as you call her, — for I pay you the compliment of believing your word as to her age, inasmuch as the night is too dark to allow me the happiness of a personal inspection, — the young lady has surely some little trinket she can dispense with. 'Beauty when unadorned,' you know, etc."

Lucy, who, though greatly frightened, lost neither her senses nor her presence of mind, only answered by drawing forth a little silk purse, that contained still less than the leathern convenience of the squire; to this she added a gold chain; and Tomlinson, taking them with an affectionate squeeze of the hand and a polite apology, was about to withdraw, when his sagacious eyes were suddenly stricken by the gleam of jewels. The fact was that in altering the position of her mother's picture, which had been set in the few hereditary diamonds possessed by the Lord of Warlock, Lucy had allowed it to hang on the outside of her dress, and bending forward to give the robber her other possessions, the

diamonds at once came in full sight, and gleamed the more invitingly from the darkness of the night.

"Ah, madam," said Tomlinson, stretching forth his hand, "you would play me false, would you? Treachery should never go unpunished. Favour me instantly with the little ornament round your neck!"

"I cannot, — I cannot!" said Lucy, grasping her treasure with both her hands; "it is my mother's picture, and my mother is dead!"

"The wants of others, madam," returned Tomlinson, who could not for the life of him *rob immorally*, "are ever more worthy your attention than family prejudices. Seriously, give it, and that instantly; we are in a hurry, and your horses are plunging like devils: they will break your carriage in an instant, — despatch!"

The squire was a brave man on the whole, though no hero; and the nerves of an old fox-hunter soon recover from a little alarm. The picture of his buried wife was yet more inestimable to him than it was to Lucy, and at this new demand his spirit was roused within him.

He clenched his fists, and advancing himself as it were on his seat, he cried in a loud voice, —

"Begone, fellow! I have given you — for my own part I think so — too much already; and, by God, you shall not have the picture!"

"Don't force me to use violence," said Augustus; and putting one foot on the carriage-step, he brought his pistol within a few inches of Lucy's breast, rightly judging, perhaps, that the show of danger to her would be the best method to intimidate the squire. At that instant the valorous moralist found himself suddenly seized with a powerful gripe on the shoulder; and a low voice, trembling with passion, hissed in his ear. Whatever might be the words that startled his organs, they operated as an instantaneous charm; and to their astonishment, the squire and Lucy beheld their assailant abruptly withdraw. The door of the carriage was clapped to, and scarcely two minutes had elapsed before, the robber having remounted, his comrade, hitherto stationed at the horses'

heads, set spurs to his own steed, and the welcome sound of receding hoofs smote upon the bewildered ears of the father and daughter.

The door of the carriage was again opened; and a voice, which made Lucy paler than the preceding terror, said, —

“I fear, Mr. Brandon, the robbers have frightened your daughter. There is now, however, nothing to fear; the ruffians are gone.”

“God bless me!” said the squire; “why, is that Captain Clifford?”

“It is; and he conceives himself too fortunate to have been of the smallest service to Mr. and Miss Brandon.”

On having convinced himself that it was indeed to Mr. Clifford that he owed his safety as well as that of his daughter, whom he believed to have been in a far more imminent peril than she really was, — for to tell thee the truth, reader, the pistol of Tomlinson was rather calculated for show than use, having a peculiarly long bright barrel with nothing in it, — the squire was utterly at a loss how to express his gratitude; and when he turned to Lucy to beg she would herself thank their gallant deliverer, he found that, overpowered with various emotions, she had, for the first time in her life, fainted away.

“Good heavens!” cried the alarmed father, “she is dead, — my Lucy, my Lucy, they have killed her!”

To open the door nearest to Lucy, to bear her from the carriage in his arms, was to Clifford the work of an instant. Utterly unconscious of the presence of any one else, — unconscious even of what he said, he poured forth a thousand wild, passionate, yet half-audible expressions; and as he bore her to a bank by the roadside, and seating himself supported her against his bosom, it would be difficult perhaps to say, whether something of delight — of burning and thrilling delight — was not mingled with his anxiety and terror. He chafed her small hands in his own; his breath, all trembling and warm, glowed upon her cheek; and once, and but once, his lips drew nearer, and breathing aside the dishevelled richness of her tresses, clung in a long and silent kiss to her own.

Meanwhile, by the help of the footman, who had now somewhat recovered his astonished senses, the squire descended from his carriage, and approached with faltering steps the place where his daughter reclined. At the instant that he took her hand, Lucy began to revive; and the first action, in the bewildered unconsciousness of awaking, was to throw her arm around the neck of her supporter.

Could all the hours and realities of hope, joy, pleasure, in Clifford's previous life have been melted down and concentrated into a single emotion, that emotion would have been but tame to the rapture of Lucy's momentary and innocent caress! And at a later yet no distant period, when in the felon's cell the grim visage of Death scowled upon him, it may be questioned whether his thoughts dwelt not far more often on the remembrance of that delightful moment than on the bitterness and ignominy of an approaching doom.

"She breathes, — she moves, — she wakes!" cried the father; and Lucy, attempting to rise, and recognizing the squire's voice, said faintly, —

"Thank God, my dear father, you are not hurt! And are they really gone? — and where — where are *we*?"

The squire, relieving Clifford of his charge, folded his child in his arms, while in his own elucidatory manner he informed her where she was, and with whom. The lovers stood face to face to each other; but what delicious blushes did the night, which concealed all but the outline of their forms, hide from the eyes of Clifford!

The honest and kind heart of Mr. Brandon was glad of a release to the indulgent sentiments it had always cherished towards the suspected and maligned Clifford, and turning now from Lucy, it fairly poured itself forth upon her deliverer. He grasped him warmly by the hand, and insisted upon his accompanying them to Bath in the carriage, and allowing the footman to ride his horse. This offer was still pending, when the footman, who had been to see after the health and comfort of his fellow-servant, came to inform the party, in a dolorous accent, of something which, in the confusion and darkness of

the night, they had not yet learned, — namely, that the horses and coachman were gone!

“Gone!” said the squire, — “gone! Why, the villains can’t (for my part, I never believe, though I have heard such wonders of, those sleight of hand) have bagged them!”

Here a low groan was audible; and the footman, sympathetically guided to the spot whence it emanated, found the huge body of the coachman safely deposited, with its face downward, in the middle of the kennel. After this worthy had been lifted to his legs, and had shaken himself into intelligence, it was found that when the robber had detained the horses, the coachman, who required very little to conquer his more bellicose faculties, had — he himself said, by a violent blow from the ruffian, though, perhaps, the cause lay nearer home — quitted the coach-box for the kennel, the horses grew frightened, and after plunging and rearing till he cared no longer to occupy himself with their arrest, the highwayman had very quietly cut the traces, and by the time present, it was not impossible that the horses were almost at the door of their stables at Bath.

The footman who had apprised the squire of this misfortune was, unlike most news-tellers, the first to offer consolation.

“There be an excellent public,” quoth he, “about a half a mile on, where your honour could get horses; or, mayhap, if Miss Lucy, poor heart, be faint, you may like to stop for the night.”

Though a walk of half a mile in a dark night and under other circumstances would not have seemed a grateful proposition, yet at present, when the squire’s imagination had only pictured to him the alternatives of passing the night in the carriage or of crawling on foot to Bath, it seemed but a very insignificant hardship; and tucking his daughter’s arm under his own, while in a kind voice he told Clifford “to support her on the other side,” the squire ordered the footman to lead the way with Clifford’s horse, and the coachman to follow or be d—d, whichever he pleased.

In silence Clifford offered his arm to Lucy, and silently she accepted the courtesy. The squire was the only talker; and

the theme he chose was not ungrateful to Lucy, for it was the praise of her lover. But Clifford scarcely listened, for a thousand thoughts and feelings contested within him; and the light touch of Lucy's hand upon his arm would alone have been sufficient to distract and confuse his attention. The darkness of the night, the late excitement, the stolen kiss that still glowed upon his lips, the remembrance of Lucy's flattering agitation in the scene with her at Lord Mauleverer's, the yet warmer one of that unconscious embrace, which still tingled through every nerve of his frame, all conspired with the delicious emotion which he now experienced at her presence and her contact to intoxicate and inflame him. Oh, those burning moments in love, when romance has just mellowed into passion, and without losing anything of its luxurious vagueness mingles the enthusiasm of its dreams with the ardent desires of reality and earth! *That* is the exact time when love has reached its highest point, — when all feelings, all thoughts, the whole soul, and the whole mind, are seized and engrossed, — when every difficulty weighed in the opposite scale seems lighter than dust, — when to renounce the object beloved is the most deadly and lasting sacrifice, — and when in so many breasts, where honour, conscience, virtue, are far stronger than we can believe them ever to have been in a criminal like Clifford, honour, conscience, virtue, have perished at once and suddenly into ashes before that mighty and irresistible fire.

The servant, who had had previous opportunities of ascertaining the topography of the "public" of which he spake, and who was perhaps tolerably reconciled to his late terror in the anticipation of renewing his intimacy with "the spirits of the past," now directed the attention of our travellers to a small inn just before them. Mine host had not yet retired to repose, and it was not necessary to knock twice before the door was opened.

A bright fire, an officious landlady, a commiserate landlord, a warm potation, and the promise of excellent beds, all appeared to our squire to make ample amends for the intelligence that the inn was not licensed to let post-horses; and

mine host having promised forthwith to send two stout fellows, a rope, and a cart-horse to bring the carriage under shelter (for the squire valued the vehicle *because* it was twenty years old), and moreover to have the harness repaired, and the horses ready by an early hour the next day, the good humour of Mr. Brandon rose into positive hilarity. Lucy retired under the auspices of the landlady to bed; and the squire having drunk a bowl of bishop, and discovered a thousand new virtues in Clifford, especially that of never interrupting a good story, clapped the captain on the shoulder, and making him promise not to leave the inn till he had seen him again, withdrew also to the repose of his pillow. Clifford remained below, gazing abstractedly on the fire for some time afterwards; nor was it till the drowsy chambermaid had thrice informed him of the prepared comforts of his bed, that he adjourned to his chamber. Even then it seems that sleep did not visit his eyelids; for a wealthy grazier, who lay in the room below, complained bitterly the next morning of some person walking overhead "in all manner of strides, just for all the world like a apparition in boots."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Viola. And dost thou love me ?

Lysander. . . . Love thee, Viola ?

Do I not fly thee when my being drinks

Light from thine eyes ? — that flight is all my answer !

The Bride, Act ii. sc. 1.

THE curtain meditations of the squire had not been without the produce of a resolve. His warm heart at once reopened to the liking he had formerly conceived for Clifford; he longed for an opportunity to atone for his past unkindness, and to testify his present gratitude; moreover, he felt at once indignant at, and ashamed of, his late conduct in joining the popular, and, as he now fully believed, the causeless prepossession

against his young friend, and before a more present and a stronger sentiment his habitual deference for his brother's counsels faded easily away. Coupled with these favourable feelings towards Clifford were his sagacious suspicions, or rather certainty, of Lucy's attachment to her handsome deliverer; and he had at least sufficient penetration to perceive that she was not likely to love him the less for the night's adventure. To all this was added the tender recollection of his wife's parting words; and the tears and tell-tale agitation of Lucy in the carriage were sufficient to his simple mind, which knew not how lightly maiden's tears are shed and dried, to confirm the prediction of the dear deceased. Nor were the squire's more generous and kindly feelings utterly unmixed with selfish considerations. *Proud*, but not the least *ambitious*, he was always more ready to confer an honour than receive one, and at heart he was secretly glad at the notion of exchanging, as a son-in-law, the polished and *unfamiliar* Mauleverer for the agreeable and social Clifford. Such in "admired disorder," were the thoughts which rolled through the teeming brain of Joseph Brandon; and before he had turned on his left side, which he always did preparatory to surrendering himself to slumber, the squire had fully come to a determination most fatal to the schemes of the lawyer and the hopes of the earl.

The next morning, as Lucy was knitting

"The loose train of her amber-dropping hair"

before the little mirror of her chamber, which even through its dimmed and darkened glass gave back a face which might have shamed a Grecian vision of Aurora, a gentle tap at her door announced her father. There was in his rosy and comely countenance that expression generally characteristic of a man pleased with himself, and persuaded that he is about to give pleasure.

"My dear child," said the squire, fondly stroking down the luxuriance of his Lucy's hair, and kissing her damask cheek, "I am come to have some little conversation with you. Sit down now, and (for my part, I love to talk at my ease; and,

by the by, shut the window, my love, it is an easterly wind) I wish that we may come to a clear and distinct understanding. Hem!—give me your hand, my child,—I think on these matters one can scarcely speak too precisely and to the purpose; although I am well aware (for, for my own part, I always wish to act to every one, to you especially, my dearest child, with the greatest consideration) that we must go to work with as much delicacy as conciseness. You know this Captain Clifford,—’tis a brave youth, is it not? Well—nay, never blush so deeply; there is nothing (for in these matters one can’t have all one’s wishes, one can’t have *everything*) to be ashamed of! Tell me now, child, dost think he is in love with thee?”

If Lucy did not immediately answer by words, her pretty lips moved as if she could readily reply; and finally they settled into so sweet and so assured a smile that the squire, fond as he was of “precise” information, was in want of no fuller answer to his question.

“Ay, ay, young lady,” said he, looking at her with all a father’s affection, “I see how it is. And, come now, what do you turn away for? Dost think, if, as I believe, though there are envious persons in the world, as there always are when a man’s handsome or clever or brave,—though, by the way, which is a very droll thing in my eyes, they don’t envy, at least not ill-naturedly, a man for being a lord or rich, but, quite on the contrary, rank and money seem to make them think one has all the cardinal virtues. Humph! If, I say, this Mr. Clifford should turn out to be a gentleman of family,—for you know that is essential, since the Brandons have, as my brother has probably told you, been a great race many centuries ago,—dost think, my child, that thou couldst give up (the cat is out of the bag) this old lord, and marry a simple gentleman?”

The hand which the squire had held was now with an arch tenderness applied to his mouth, and when he again seized it Lucy hid her glowing face in his bosom; and it was only by a whisper, as if the very air was garrulous, that he could draw forth (for now he insisted on a verbal reply) her happy answer.

We are not afraid that our reader will blame us for not detailing the rest of the interview between the father and daughter: it did not last above an hour longer; for the squire declared that, for his own part, he hated more words than were necessary. Mr. Brandon was the first to descend to the breakfast, muttering as he descended the stairs, "Well now, hang me if I am not glad that 's off (for I do not like to think much of so silly a matter) my mind. And as for my brother, I sha'n't tell him till it's all over and settled. And if he is angry, he and the old lord may, though I don't mean to be unbrotherly, go to the devil together!"

When the three were assembled at the breakfast-table, there could not, perhaps, have been found anywhere a stronger contrast than that which the radiant face of Lucy bore to the haggard and worn expression that disfigured the handsome features of her lover. So marked was the change that one night seemed to have wrought upon Clifford, that even the squire was startled and alarmed at it. But Lucy, whose innocent vanity pleased itself with accounting for the alteration, consoled herself with the hope of soon witnessing a very different expression on the countenance of her lover; and though she was silent, and her happiness lay quiet and deep within her, yet in her eyes and lip there was that which seemed to Clifford an insult to his own misery, and stung him to the heart. However, he exerted himself to meet the conversation of the squire, and to mask as well as he was able the evidence of the conflict which still raged within him.

The morning was wet and gloomy; it was that drizzling and misty rain which is so especially nutritious to the growth of blue devils, and the jolly squire failed not to rally his young friend upon his feminine susceptibility to the influences of the weather. Clifford replied jestingly; and the jest, if bad, was good enough to content the railer. In this facetious manner passed the time, till Lucy, at the request of her father, left the room to prepare for their return home.

Drawing his chair near to Clifford's, the squire then commenced in real and affectionate earnest his operations — these he had already planned — in the following order: they were,

first, to inquire into and to learn Clifford's rank, family, and prospects; secondly, having ascertained the proprieties of the outer man, they were to examine the state of the inner one; and thirdly, should our skilful inquirer find his guesses at Clifford's affection for Lucy confirmed, they were to expel the modest fear of a repulse, which the squire allowed was natural enough, and to lead the object of the inquiry to a knowledge of the happiness that, Lucy consenting, might be in store for him. While, with his wonted ingenuity, the squire was pursuing his benevolent designs, Lucy remained in her own room, in such meditation and such dreams as were natural to a heart so sanguine and enthusiastic.

She had been more than half an hour alone, when the chambermaid of the hostelry knocked at her door, and delivered a message from the squire, begging her to come down to him in the parlour. With a heart that beat so violently it almost seemed to wear away its very life, Lucy slowly and with tremulous steps descended to the parlour. On opening the door she saw Clifford standing in the recess of the window; his face was partly turned from her, and his eyes downcast. The good old squire sat in an elbow-chair, and a sort of puzzled and half-satisfied complacency gave expression to his features.

"Come hither, child," said he, clearing his throat; "Captain Clifford — ahem! — has done you the honour to — and I dare say you will be very much surprised — not that, for my own part, I think there is much to wonder at in it, but such may be my partial opinion (and *it is certainly very natural in me*) — *to make you a declaration of love*. He declares, moreover, that he is the most miserable of men, and that he would die sooner than have the presumption to hope. Therefore you see, my love, I have sent for you, to give him permission to destroy himself in any way he pleases; and I leave him to show cause why (it is a fate that sooner or later happens to all his fellow-men) sentence of death should not be passed against him." Having delivered this speech with more propriety of word than usually fell to his share, the squire rose hastily and hobbled out of the room.

Lucy sank into the chair her father had quitted; and Clifford, approaching towards her, said in a hoarse and low voice, —

“Your father, Miss Brandon, says rightly, that I would die rather than lift my eyes in hope to you. I thought yesterday that I had seen you for the last time; chance, not my own folly or presumption, has brought me again before you; and even the few hours I have passed under the same roof with you have made me feel as if my love, my madness, had never reached its height till now. Oh, Lucy!” continued Clifford, in a more impassioned tone, and, as if by a sudden and irresistible impulse, throwing himself at her feet, “if I *could* hope to merit you, — if I could hope to raise myself, — if I could — But no, no, no! I am cut off from all hope, and forever!”

There was so deep, so bitter, so heartfelt an anguish and remorse in the voice with which these last words were spoken, that Lucy, hurried off her guard, and forgetting everything in wondering sympathy and compassion, answered, extending her hand towards Clifford, who, still kneeling, seized and covered it with kisses of fire, —

“Do not speak thus, Mr. Clifford; do not accuse yourself of what I am sure, quite sure, you cannot deserve. Perhaps — forgive me — your birth, your fortune, are beneath your merits, and you have penetrated into my father’s weakness on the former point; or perhaps you yourself have not avoided all the errors into which men are hurried, — perhaps you have been imprudent or thoughtless, perhaps you have (fashion is contagious) played beyond your means or incurred debts: these are faults, it is true, and to be regretted, yet surely not irreparable.”

For that instant can it be wondered that all Clifford’s resolution and self-denial deserted him, and lifting his eyes, radiant with joy and gratitude, to the face which bent in benevolent innocence towards him, he exclaimed, —

“No, Miss Brandon! — no, Lucy! — dear, angel Lucy! my faults are less venial than these, but perhaps they are no less the consequence of circumstances and contagion; perhaps it may not be too late to repair them. Would you — you in-

deed deign to be my guardian, I might not despair of being saved!"

"If," said Lucy, blushing deeply and looking down, while she spoke quick and eagerly, as if to avoid humbling him by her offer, — "if, Mr. Clifford, the want of wealth has in any way occasioned you uneasiness or — or error, do believe me — I mean *us* — so much your friends as not for an instant to scruple in relieving us of some little portion of our last night's debt to you."

"Dear, noble girl!" said Clifford, while there writhed upon his lips one of those smiles of powerful sarcasm that sometimes distorted his features, and thrillingly impressed upon Lucy a resemblance to one very different in reputation and character to her lover, — "do not attribute my misfortunes to so petty a source; it is not money that I shall want while I live, though I shall to my last breath remember this delicacy in you, and compare it with certain base remembrances in my own mind. Yes! all past thoughts and recollections will make me hereafter worship you even more than I do now; while in your heart they will — unless Heaven grant me one prayer — make you scorn and detest me!"

"For mercy's sake, do not speak thus!" said Lucy, gazing in indistinct alarm upon the dark and working features of her lover. "Scorn, detest you! Impossible! How could I, after the remembrance of last night?"

"Ay! of last night," said Clifford, speaking through his ground teeth, — "there is much in that remembrance to live long in both of us; but you — *you* — fair angel" (and all harshness and irony vanishing at once from his voice and countenance, yielded to a tender and deep sadness, mingled with a respect that bordered on reverence), — "*you* never could have dreamed of more than pity for one like me, — you never could have stooped from your high and dazzling purity to know for me one such thought as that which burns at my heart for you, — you — Yes, withdraw your hand, I am not worthy to touch it!" And clasping his own hands before his face, he became abruptly silent; but his emotions were but ill-concealed, and Lucy saw the muscular frame before her

heaved and convulsed by passions which were more intense and rending because it was only for a few moments that they conquered his self-will and struggled into vent.

If afterwards, but *long* afterwards, Lucy, recalling the mystery of his words, confessed to herself that they betrayed guilt, she was then too much affected to think of anything but her love and his emotion. She bent down, and with a girlish and fond self-abandonment which none could have resisted, placed both her hands on his. Clifford started, looked up, and in the next moment he had clasped her to his heart; and while the only tears he had shed since his career of crime fell fast and hot upon her countenance, he kissed her forehead, her cheek, her lips in a passionate and wild transport. His voice died within him,—he could not trust himself to speak; only one thought, even in that seeming forgetfulness of her and of himself, stirred and spoke at his breast, —*flight*. The more he felt he loved, the more tender and the more confiding the object of his love, the more urgent became the necessity to leave her. All other duties had been neglected, but he loved with a real love; and love, which *taught* him *one* duty, *bore* him triumphantly through its bitter ordeal.

“You will hear from me to-night,” he muttered; “believe that I am mad, accursed, criminal, but not utterly a monster! I ask no more merciful opinion!” He drew himself from his perilous position, and abruptly departed.

When Clifford reached his home, he found his worthy coadjutors waiting for him with alarm and terror on their countenances. An old feat, in which they had signalized themselves, had long attracted the rigid attention of the police, and certain officers had now been seen at Bath, and certain inquiries had been set on foot, which portended no good to the safety of the sagacious Tomlinson and the valorous Pepper. They came, humbly and penitentially demanding pardon for their unconscious aggression of the squire’s carriage, and entreating their captain’s instant advice. If Clifford had before wavered in his disinterested determination, — if visions of Lucy, of happiness, and reform had floated in his solitary ride too frequently and too glowingly before his eyes, — the

sight of these men, their conversation, their danger, all sufficed to restore his resolution. "Merciful God!" thought he, "and is it to the comrade of such lawless villains, to a man, like them, exposed hourly to the most ignominious of deaths, that I have for one section of a moment dreamed of consigning the innocent and generous girl, whose trust or love is the only crime that could deprive her of the most brilliant destiny?"

Short were Clifford's instructions to his followers, and so much do we do mechanically, that they were delivered with his usual forethought and precision. "You will leave the town instantly; go not, for your lives, to London, or to rejoin any of your comrades. Ride for the Red Cave; provisions are stored there, and, since our late alteration of the interior, it will afford ample room to conceal your horses. On the night of the second day from this I will join you. But be sure that you enter the cave at night, and quit it upon no account till I come!"

"Yes!" said he, when he was alone, "I will join you again, but only to quit you. One more offence against the law, or at least one sum wrested from the swollen hands of the rich sufficient to equip me for a foreign army, and I quit the country of my birth and my crimes. If I cannot deserve Lucy Brandon, I will be somewhat less unworthy. Perhaps — why not? I am young, my nerves are not weak, my brain is not dull, — perhaps I may in some field of honourable adventure win a name that before my death-bed I may not blush to acknowledge to her!"

While this resolve beat high within Clifford's breast, Lucy sadly and in silence was continuing with the squire her short journey to Bath. The latter was very inquisitive to know why Clifford had gone, and what he had avowed; and Lucy, scarcely able to answer, threw everything on the promised letter of the night.

"I am glad," muttered the squire to her, "that he is going to write; for, somehow or other, though I questioned him very tightly, he slipped through my cross-examination, and bursting out at once as to his love for you, left me as wise

about himself as I was before: no doubt (for my own part I don't see what should prevent his being a great man *incog.*) this letter will explain all!"

Late that night the letter came. Lucy, fortunately for her, was alone in her room; she opened it, and read as follows:—

CLIFFORD'S LETTER.

I have promised to write to you, and I sit down to perform that promise. At this moment the recollection of your goodness, your generous consideration, is warm within me: and while I must choose calm and common words to express what I ought to say, my heart is alternately melted and torn by thoughts which would ask words, oh how different! Your father has questioned me often of my parentage and birth, — I have hitherto eluded his interrogatories. Learn now who I am. In a wretched abode, surrounded by the inhabitants of poverty and vice, I recall my earliest recollections. My father is unknown to me as to every one; my mother, — to *you* I dare not mention who or what she was, — she died in my infancy. Without a name, but not without an inheritance (my inheritance was large, — it was infamy!), I was thrown upon the world. I had received by accident some education, and imbibed some ideas not natural to my situation; since then I have played many parts in life. Books and men I have not so neglected but that I have gleaned at intervals some little knowledge from both. Hence, if I have seemed to you better than I am, you will perceive the cause. Circumstances made me soon my own master; they made me also one whom honest men do not love to look upon; my deeds have been, and my character is, of a par with my birth and my fortunes. I came, in the noble hope to raise and redeem myself by gilding my fate with a wealthy marriage, to this city. I saw you, whom I had once before met. I heard you were rich. Hate me, Miss Brandon, hate me! — I resolved to make your ruin the cause of my redemption. Happily for you, I scarcely knew you before I loved you; that love deepened, — it caught something pure and elevated from yourself. My resolution forsook me; even now I could throw myself on my knees and thank God that you — you, dearest and noblest of human beings — are not my wife. Now, is my conduct clear to you? If not, imagine me all that is villanous, save in one point, where *you* are concerned, and not a shadow of mystery will remain. Your kind father, overrating the paltry service I rendered you, would have consented to submit my fate to your decision. I blush indignantly for him — for you — that any living man

should have dreamed of such profanation for Miss Brandon. Yet I myself was carried away and intoxicated by so sudden and so soft a hope, — even I dared to lift my eyes to you, to press you to this guilty heart, to forget myself, and to dream that you might be mine! Can you forgive me for this madness? And hereafter, when in your lofty and glittering sphere of wedded happiness, can you remember my presumption and check your scorn? Perhaps you think that by so *late* a confession I have already deceived you. Alas! you know not what it costs me *now* to confess! I had only one hope in life, — it was that you might still, long after you had ceased to see me, fancy me not utterly beneath the herd with whom you live. This burning yet selfish vanity I tear from me, and now I go where no hope can pursue me. No hope for myself, save one which can scarcely deserve the name, for it is rather a rude and visionary wish than an expectation, — it is that under another name and under different auspices you may hear of me at some distant time; and when I apprise you that under that name you may recognize one who loves you better than all created things, you may feel *then*, at least, no cause for shame at your lover. What will *you* be then? A happy wife, a mother, the centre of a thousand joys, beloved, admired, blest when the eye sees you and the ear hears! And this is what I ought to hope, this is the consolation that ought to cheer me; perhaps a little time hence it will. Not that I shall love you less, but that I shall love you less burningly, and therefore less selfishly. I have now written to you all that it becomes you to receive from me. My horse waits below to bear me from this city, and forever from your vicinity. Forever! — ay, you are the only blessing *forever* forbidden me. Wealth I may gain, a fair name, even glory I may perhaps aspire to, — to heaven itself I may find a path; but of *you* my very dreams cannot give me the shadow of a hope. I do not say, if you could pierce my soul while I write, that you would pity me. You may think it strange, but I would not have your *pity* for worlds; I think I would even rather have your hate, — pity seems so much like contempt. But if you knew what an effort has enabled me to tame down my language, to curb my thoughts, to prevent me from embodying that which now makes my brain whirl, and my hand feel as if the living fire consumed it; if you knew what has enabled me to triumph over the madness at my heart, and spare you what, if writ or spoken, would seem like the ravings of insanity, you would not and you could not despise me, though you might abhor.

And now Heaven guard and bless you! Nothing on *earth* could injure you. And even the wicked who have looked upon you learn to pray, — *I have prayed for you!*

Thus, abrupt and signatureless, ended the expected letter. Lucy came down the next morning at her usual hour, and, except that she was very pale, nothing in her appearance seemed to announce past grief or emotion. The squire asked her if she had received the promised letter. She answered, in a clear though faint voice, that she had, — that Mr. Clifford had confessed himself of too low an origin to hope for marriage with Mr. Brandon's family; that she trusted the squire would keep his secret; and that the subject might never again be alluded to by either. If in this speech there was something alien to Lucy's ingenuous character, and painful to her mind, she felt it as it were a duty to her former lover not to betray the whole of that confession so bitterly wrung from him. Perhaps, too, there was in that letter a charm which seemed to her too sacred to be revealed to any one; and mysteries were not excluded even from a love so ill-placed and seemingly so transitory as hers.

Lucy's answer touched the squire in his weak point. "A man of decidedly low origin," he confessed, "was utterly out of the question; nevertheless, the young man showed a great deal of candour in his disclosure." He readily promised never to broach a subject necessarily so unpleasant; and though he sighed as he finished his speech, yet the extreme quiet of Lucy's manner reassured him; and when he perceived that she resumed, though languidly, her wonted avocations, he felt but little doubt of her soon overcoming the remembrance of what he hoped was but a girlish and fleeting fancy. He yielded, with avidity, to her proposal to return to Warlock; and in the same week as that in which Lucy had received her lover's mysterious letter, the father and daughter commenced their journey home.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Butler. What are these, sir?

Yeoman. And of what nature, to what use?

Latroc. Imagine.

The Tragedy of Rollo.

Quickly. He's in Arthur's bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom.

Henry V.

THE stream of our narrative now conducts us back to William Brandon. The law-promotions previously intended were completed; and to the surprise of the public, the envied barrister, undergoing the degradation of knighthood, had, at the time we return to him, just changed his toilsome occupations for the serene dignity of the bench. Whatever regret this wily and aspiring schemer might otherwise have felt at an elevation considerably less distinguished than he might reasonably have expected, was entirely removed by the hopes afforded to him of a speedy translation to a more brilliant office: it was whispered among those not unlikely to foresee such events, that the interest of the government required his talents in the house of peers. Just at this moment, too, the fell disease, whose ravages Brandon endeavoured, as jealously as possible, to hide from the public, had appeared suddenly to yield to the skill of a new physician; and by the administration of medicines which a man less stern or resolute might have trembled to adopt (so powerful and for the most part deadly was their nature), he passed from a state of almost insufferable torture to an elysium of tranquillity and ease. Perhaps, however, the medicines which altered also decayed his constitution; and it was observable that in two cases where the physician had attained a like success by the same means, the patients had died suddenly, exactly at the time when their cure seemed to be finally completed. However,

Sir William Brandon appeared very little anticipative of danger. His manner became more cheerful and even than it had ever been before; there was a certain lightness in his gait, a certain exhilaration in his voice and eye, which seemed the tokens of one from whom a heavy burden had been suddenly raised, and who was no longer prevented from the eagerness of hope by the engrossing claims of a bodily pain. He had always been bland in society, but now his courtesy breathed less of artifice, — it took a more hearty tone. Another alteration was discernible in him, and that was precisely the reverse of what might have been expected. He became more *thrifty*, more attentive to the expenses of life than he had been. Though a despiser of show and ostentation, and far too *hard* to be luxurious, he was too scientific an architect of the weaknesses of others not to have maintained during his public career an opulent appearance and a hospitable table. The profession he had adopted requires, perhaps, less of externals to aid it than any other; still Brandon had affected to preserve parliamentary as well as legal importance; and though his house was situated in a quarter entirely professional, he had been accustomed to assemble around his hospitable board all who were eminent, in his political party, for rank or for talent. Now, however, when hospitality and a certain largeness of expenses better became his station, he grew closer and more exact in his economy. Brandon never could have degenerated into a *miser*; money, to one so habitually wise as he was, could never have passed from means into an object; but he had evidently, for some cause or another, formed the resolution to save. Some said it was the result of returning health, and the hope of a prolonged life, to which many objects for which wealth is desirable might occur. But when it was accidentally ascertained that Brandon had been making several inquiries respecting a large estate in the neighbourhood of Warlock, formerly in the possession of his family, the gossips (for Brandon was a man to be gossiped about) were no longer in want of a motive, false or real, for the judge's thrift.

It was shortly after his elevation to the bench, and ere

these signs of change had become noticeable, that the same strange ragamuffin whom we have mentioned before, as introduced by Mr. Swoppem to a private conference with Brandon, was admitted to the judge's presence.

"Well," said Brandon, impatiently, the moment the door was closed, "your news?"

"Vy, your 'onor," said the man, bashfully, twirling a thing that stood proxy for a hat, "I thinks as 'ow I shall be hable to satisfy your vorship's 'onor." Then, approaching the judge and assuming an important air, he whispered, "'Tis as 'ow I thought!"

"My God!" cried Brandon, with vehemence. "And he is alive, — and where?"

"I believes," answered the seemly confidant of Sir William Brandon, "that he be 's alive; and if he be 's alive, may I flash my ivories in a glass case, if I does not ferret him out; but as to saying where he be at this nick o' the moment, smash me if I can!"

"Is he in this country," said Brandon; "or do you believe that he has gone abroad?"

"Vy, much of one and not a little of the other!" said the euphonious confidant.

"How! speak plain, man; what do you mean?"

"Vy, I means, your 'onor, that I can't say where he is."

"And this," said Brandon, with a muttered oath, — "this is your boasted news, is it? Dog! damned, damned dog! if you trifle with me or play me false, I will hang you, — by the living God, I will!"

The man shrank back, involuntarily from Brandon's vindictive forehead and kindled eyes; but with the cunning peculiar to low vice, answered, though in a humbler tone, —

"And vot good vill that do your 'onor? If so be as how you scraggs I, vill that put your vorship in the vay of finding *he*?"

Never was there an obstacle in grammar through which a sturdy truth could not break; and Brandon, after a moody pause, said in a milder voice, —

"I did not mean to frighten you! Never mind what I said;

but you can surely guess whereabouts he is, or what means of life he pursues. Perhaps," — and a momentary paleness crossed Brandon's swarthy visage, — "perhaps he may have been driven into dishonesty in order to maintain himself!"

The informant replied with great *naïveté* that such a thing was not impossible! And Brandon then entered into a series of seemingly careless but artful cross-questionings, which either the ignorance or the craft of the man enabled him to baffle. After some time Brandon, disappointed and dissatisfied, gave up his professional task; and bestowing on the man many sagacious and minute instructions as well as a very liberal donation, he was forced to dismiss his mysterious visitor, and to content himself with an assured assertion that if the object of his inquiries should not already be gone to the devil, the strange gentleman employed to discover him would certainly, sooner or later, bring him to the judge.

This assertion, and the interview preceding it, certainly inspired Sir William Brandon with a feeling like complacency, although it was mingled with a considerable alloy.

"I do not," thought he, concluding his meditations when he was left alone, — "I do not see what else I can do! Since it appears that the boy had not even a name when he set out alone from his wretched abode, I fear that an advertisement would have but little chance of even designating, much less of finding him, after so long an absence. Besides, it might make me the prey to impostors; and in all probability he has either left the country, or adopted some mode of living which would prevent his daring to disclose himself!" This thought plunged the soliloquist into a gloomy abstraction, which lasted several minutes, and from which he started, muttering aloud, —

"Yes, yes! I dare to believe, to hope it. Now for the minister and the peerage!" And from that time the root of Sir William Brandon's ambition spread with a firmer and more extended grasp over his mind.

We grieve very much that the course of our story should now oblige us to record an event which we would willingly have spared ourselves the pain of narrating. The good old Squire of Warlock Manor-house had scarcely reached his home on

his return from Bath, before William Brandon received the following letter from his brother's gray-headed butler:—

HONNURED SUR,—I send this with all speede, thof with a hevvy hart, to axquainte you with the sudden (and it is feered by his loving friends and well-wishers, which latter, to be sur, is all as knows him) dangeros illness of the Squire.¹ He was seezed, poor deer gentleman (for God never made a better, no offence to your Honnur), the moment he set footing in his Own Hall, and what has hung rond me like a millston ever sin, is that instead of his saying, "How do you do, Sampson?" as was his wont, whenever he returned from forren parts, sich as Bath, Lunnun, and the like, he said, "God bless you, Sampson!" which makes me think sumhow that it will be his last wurd; for he has never spoke sin, for all Miss Lucy be by his bedside continual. She, poor deer, don't take on at all, in regard of crying and such woman's wurk, but looks nevertheless, for all the wurd, just like a copse. I sends Tom the postilion with this hexpress, nowing he is a good hand at a gallop, having, not sixteen years ago, beat some o' the best on 'un at a raceng. Hoping as yer Honnur will lose no time in coming to this "house of mourning," I remane, with all respect,

Your Honnur's humble servant to command,

JOHN SAMPSON.

Sir William Brandon did not give himself time to re-read this letter, in order to make it more intelligible, before he wrote to one of his professional compeers, requesting him to fill his place during his unavoidable absence, on the melancholy occasion of his brother's expected death; and having so done, he immediately set off for Warlock. Inexplicable even to himself was that feeling, so nearly approaching to real sorrow, which the worldly lawyer felt at the prospect of losing his guileless and unspeculating brother. Whether it be that turbulent and ambitious minds, in choosing for their wavering affections the very opposites of themselves, feel (on losing the fellowship of those calm, fair characters that have never crossed their rugged path) as if they lost, in losing them, a

¹ The reader, who has doubtless noticed how invariably servants of long standing acquire a certain tone from that of their master, may observe that honest John Sampson had caught from the squire the habit of parenthetical composition.

kind of haven for their own restless thoughts and tempest-worn designs!—be this as it may, certain it is that when William Brandon arrived at his brother's door, and was informed by the old butler, who for the first time was slow to greet him, that the squire had just breathed his last, his austere nature forsook him at once, and he felt the shock with a severity perhaps still keener than that which a more genial and affectionate heart would have experienced.

As soon as he had recovered his self-possession, Sir William made question of his niece; and finding that after an unrelaxing watch during the whole of the squire's brief illness, nature had failed her at his death, and she had been borne senseless from his chamber to her own, Brandon walked with a step far different from his usual stately gait to the room where his brother lay. It was one of the oldest apartments in the house, and much of the ancient splendour that belonged to the mansion ere its size had been reduced, with the fortunes of its successive owners, still distinguished the chamber. The huge mantelpiece ascending to the carved ceiling in grotesque pilasters, and scroll-work of the blackest oak, with the quartered arms of Brandon and Saville escutcheoned in the centre; the panelled walls of the same dark wainscot; the *armorie* of ebony; the high-backed chairs, with their tapestried seats; the lofty bed, with its hearse-like plumes and draperies of a crimson damask that seemed, so massy was the substance and so prominent the flowers, as if it were rather a carving than a silk,—all conspired with the size of the room to give it a feudal solemnity, not perhaps suited to the rest of the house, but well calculated to strike a gloomy awe into the breast of the worldly and proud man who now entered the death-chamber of his brother.

Silently William Brandon motioned away the attendants, and silently he seated himself by the bed, and looked long and wistfully upon the calm and placid face of the deceased. It is difficult to guess at what passed within him during the space of time in which he remained alone in that room. The apartment itself he could not at another period have tenanted without secret emotion. It was that in which, as a boy, he

had himself been accustomed to sleep; and, even then a schemer and an aspirant, the very sight of the room sufficed to call back all the hopes and visions, the restless projects and the feverish desires, which had now brought him to the envied state of an acknowledged celebrity and a shattered frame. There must have been something awful in the combination of those active remembrances with the cause which had led him to that apartment; and there was a homily in the serene countenance of the dead, which preached more effectually to the heart of the living than William Brandon would ever have cared to own. He had been more than an hour in the room, and the evening had already begun to cast deep shadows through the small panes of the half-closed window, when Brandon was startled by a slight noise. He looked up, and beheld Lucy opposite to him. She did not see him; but throwing herself upon the bed, she took the cold hand of the deceased, and after a long silence burst into a passion of tears.

"My father!" she sobbed, — "my kind, good father! who will love me now?"

"I!" said Brandon, deeply affected; and passing round the bed, he took his niece in his arms: "I will be your father, Lucy, and you — the last of our race — shall be to me as a daughter!"

CHAPTER XXV.

FALSEHOOD in him was not the useless lie
Of boasting pride or laughing vanity :
It was the gainful, the persuading art, *etc.*

CRABBE

On with the horses — off to Canterbury,
Tramp, tramp o'er pebble, and splash, splash thro' puddle ;
Hurrah ! how swiftly speeds the post so merry !

“ Here laws are all inviolate : none lay
Traps for the traveller ; every highway 's clear ;
Here — ” he was interrupted by a knife,
With “ D— your eyes ! your money or your life ! ”

Don Juan.

MISFORTUNES are like the creations of Cadmus, — they destroy one another ! Roused from the torpor of mind occasioned by the loss of her lover at the sudden illness of the squire, Lucy had no thought for herself, no thought for any one, for anything but her father, till long after the earth had closed over his remains. The very activity of the latter grief was less dangerous than the quiet of the former ; and when the first keenness of sorrow passed away, and her mind gradually and mechanically returned to the remembrance of Clifford, it was with an intensity less strong, and less fatal to her health and happiness than before. She thought it unnatural and criminal to allow anything else to grieve her, while she had so sacred a grief as that of her loss ; and her mind, once aroused into resistance to passion, betrayed a native strength little to have been expected from her apparent character. Sir William Brandon lost no time in returning to town after the burial of his brother. He insisted upon taking his niece with him ; and, though with real reluctance, she yielded to his wishes, and accompanied him. By the

squire's will, indeed, Sir William was appointed guardian to Lucy, and she yet wanted more than a year of her majority.

Brandon, with a delicacy very uncommon to him where women (for he was a confirmed woman-hater) were concerned, provided everything that he thought could in any way conduce to her comfort. He ordered it to be understood in his establishment that she was its mistress. He arranged and furnished, according to what he imagined to be her taste, a suite of apartments for her sole accommodation; a separate carriage and servants were appropriated to her use; and he sought, by perpetual presents of books or flowers or music, to occupy her thoughts, and atone for the solitude to which his professional duties obliged him so constantly to consign her. These attentions, which showed this strange man in a new light, seemed to bring out many little latent amiabilities, which were usually imbedded in the callosities of his rocky nature; and, even despite her causes for grief and the deep melancholy which consumed her, Lucy was touched with gratitude at kindness doubly soothing in one who, however urbane and polished, was by no means addicted to the little attentions that are considered so gratifying by women, and yet for which they so often despise, while they like, him who affords them. There was much in Brandon that wound itself insensibly around the heart. To one more experienced than Lucy, this involuntary attraction might not have been incompatible with suspicion, and could scarcely have been associated with esteem; and yet for all who knew him intimately, even for the penetrating and selfish Mauleverer, the attraction existed. Unprincipled, crafty, hypocritical, even base when it suited his purpose; secretly sneering at the dupes he made, and knowing no code save that of interest and ambition; viewing men only as machines, and opinions only as ladders, — there was yet a tone of powerful feeling sometimes elicited from a heart that could at the same moment have sacrificed a whole people to the pettiest personal object: and sometimes *with* Lucy the eloquence or irony of his conversation deepened into a melancholy, a half-suppressed gentleness of sentiment, that accorded with the state of *her own* mind and interested her

kind feelings powerfully in *his*. It was these peculiarities in his converse which made Lucy love to hear him; and she gradually learned to anticipate with a gloomy pleasure the hour in which, after the occupations of the day, he was accustomed to join her.

"You look unwell, uncle, to-night," she said, when one evening he entered the room with looks more fatigued than usual; and rising, she leaned tenderly over him, and kissed his forehead.

"Ay!" said Brandon, utterly unwon by, and even unheeding, the caress, "our way of life soon passes into the sear and yellow leaf; and when Macbeth grieved that he might not look to have that which should accompany old age, he had grown doting, and grieved for what was worthless."

"Nay, uncle, 'honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,' — *these* surely were worth the sighing for?"

"Pooh! not worth a single sigh! The foolish wishes we form in youth have something noble and something *bodily* in them; but those of age are utter shadows, and the shadows of pygmies! Why, what is honour, after all? What is this good name among men? Only a sort of heathenish idol, set up to be adored by one set of fools and scorned by another. Do you not observe, Lucy, that the man you hear most praised by the party you meet to-day is most abused by that which you meet to-morrow? Public men are only praised by their party; and their party, sweet Lucy, are such base minions that it moves one's spleen to think one is so little as to be useful to them. Thus a good name is only the good name of a sect, and the members of that sect are only marvellous proper knaves."

"But posterity does justice to those who really deserve fame."

"Posterity! Can you believe that a man who knows what life is cares for the penny whistles of grown children after his death? Posterity, Lucy, — no! Posterity is but the same perpetuity of fools and rascals; and even were justice desirable at their hands, they could *not* deal it. Do men agree whether Charles Stuart was a liar or a martyr? For how

many ages have we believed Nero a monster! A writer now asks, as if demonstrating a problem, what real historian could doubt that Nero was a paragon? The patriarchs of Scripture have been declared by modern philosophy to be a series of astronomical hieroglyphs; and, with greater show of truth, we are assured that the patriot Tell never existed! Posterity! the word has gulled men enough without *my* adding to the number. I, who loathe the living, can scarcely venerate the unborn. Lucy, believe me that no man can mix largely with men in political life, and not despise everything that in youth he adored! Age leaves us only one feeling, — contempt!"

"Are you belied, then?" said Lucy, pointing to a newspaper, the organ of the party opposed to Brandon: "are you belied when you are here called 'ambitious'? When they call you 'selfish' and 'grasping,' I know they wrong you; but I confess that I *have* thought you ambitious; yet can he who despises men desire their good opinion?"

"Their good opinion!" repeated Brandon, mockingly: "do we want the bray of the asses we ride? No!" he resumed, after a pause. "It is *power*, not *honour*; it is the hope of elevating oneself in every respect, in the world without as well as in the world of one's own mind: it is this hope which makes me labour where I might rest, and will continue the labour to my grave. Lucy," continued Brandon, fixing his keen eyes on his niece, "have you no ambition, — have power and pomp and place no charm for your mind?"

"None!" said Lucy, quietly and simply.

"Indeed! yet there are times when I have thought I recognized my blood in your veins. You are sprung from a once noble, but a fallen race. Are you ever susceptible to the weakness of ancestral pride?"

"You say," answered Lucy, "that we should care not for those who live after us; much less, I imagine, should we care for those who have lived ages before!"

"Prettily answered," said Brandon, smiling. "I will tell you at one time or another what effect that weakness you despise already once had, long after your age, upon me. You are early wise on some points; profit by my experience, and be so on *all*."

"That is to say, in despising all men and all things!" said Lucy, also smiling.

"Well, never mind my creed, — you may be wise after your own; but trust one, dearest Lucy, who loves you purely and disinterestedly, and who has weighed with scales balanced to a hair all the advantages to be gleaned from an earth in which I verily think the harvest was gathered before we were put into it, — trust me, Lucy, and never think love, that maiden's dream, so valuable as rank and power: pause well before you yield to the former; accept the latter the moment they are offered you. Love puts you at the feet of another, and that other a tyrant; rank puts others at your feet, and all those thus subjected are your slaves!"

Lucy moved her chair so that the new position concealed her face, and did not answer; and Brandon, in an altered tone, continued, —

"Would you think, Lucy, that I once was fool enough to imagine that love was a blessing, and to be eagerly sought for? I gave up my hopes, my chances of wealth, of distinction, — all that had burned from the years of boyhood into my very heart. I chose poverty, obscurity, humiliation; but I chose also love. What was my reward? Lucy Brandon, I was deceived, — deceived!"

Brandon paused; and Lucy took his hand affectionately, but did not break the silence. Brandon resumed: —

"Yes, I was deceived! But I in my turn had a revenge, and a fitting revenge; for it was not the revenge of hatred, but" (and the speaker laughed sardonically) "of contempt. Enough of this, Lucy! What I wished to say to you is this, — grown men and women know more of the truth of things than ye young persons think for. Love is a mere bauble, and no human being ever exchanged for it one solid advantage without repentance. Believe this; and if rank ever puts itself under those pretty feet, be sure not to spurn the footstool."

So saying, with a slight laugh, Brandon lighted his chamber candle, and left the room for the night.

As soon as the lawyer reached his own apartment, he indited to Lord Mauleverer the following epistle: —

"Why, dear Mauleverer, do you not come to town? I want you, your party wants you; perhaps the K—g wants you; and certainly, if you are serious about my niece, the care of your own love-suit should induce you yourself to want to come hither. I have paved the way for you; and I think, with a little management, you may anticipate a speedy success. But Lucy is a strange girl; and, perhaps, after all, though you ought to be on the spot, you had better leave her as much as possible in my hands. I know human nature, Mauleverer, and that knowledge is the engine by which I will work your triumph. As for the young lover, I am not quite sure whether it be not better for our sake that Lucy should have experienced a disappointment on that score; for when a woman has once loved, and the love is utterly hopeless, she puts all vague ideas of other lovers altogether out of her head; she becomes contented with a husband *whom she can esteem!* Sweet canter! But *you*, Mauleverer, want Lucy *to love you!* And so she will—after you have married her! She will love you partly from the advantages she derives from you, partly from familiarity (to say nothing of your good qualities). For my part, I think domesticity goes so far that I believe a woman always inclined to be affectionate to a man whom she has once seen in his nightcap. However, you should come to town; my poor brother's recent death allows us to see no one, — the coast will be clear from rivals; grief has softened my niece's heart; in a word, you could not have a better opportunity. Come!

"By the way, you say one of the reasons which made you think ill of this Captain Clifford was your impression that in the figure of one of his comrades you recognized something that appeared to you to resemble one of the fellows who robbed you a few months ago. I understand that at this moment the police are in active pursuit of three most accomplished robbers; nor should I be at all surprised if in this very Clifford were to be found the leader of the gang, namely, the notorious Lovett. I hear that the said leader is a clever and a handsome fellow, of a gentlemanlike address, and that his general associates are two men of the exact stamp of the worthies you have so amusingly described to me. I heard this yesterday from Nabbem, the police-officer with whom I once scraped acquaintance on a trial; and in my grudge against your rival, I hinted at my suspicion that he, Captain Clifford, might not impossibly prove this Rinaldo Rinaldini of the roads. Nabbem caught at my hint at once; so that, if it be founded on a true guess, I may flatter my conscience as well as my friendship by the hope that I have had some hand in hanging this Adonis of my niece's. Whether my guess be true or not, Nabbem says he is sure of this Lovett; for one of his gang has promised to betray him. Hang these aspiring dogs! I thought

treachery was confined to politics; and that thought makes me turn to public matters, in which all people are turning with the most edifying celerity. . . .”

Sir William Brandon's epistle found Mauleverer in a fitting mood for Lucy and for London. Our worthy peer had been not a little chagrined by Lucy's sudden departure from Bath; and while in doubt whether or not to follow her, the papers had informed him of the squire's death. Mauleverer, being then fully aware of the impossibility of immediately urging his suit, endeavoured, like the true philosopher he was, to reconcile himself to his hope deferred. Few people were more easily susceptible of consolation than Lord Mauleverer. He found an agreeable lady, of a face more unfaded than her reputation, to whom he intrusted the care of relieving his leisure moments from *ennui*; and being a lively woman, the *confidante* discharged the trust with great satisfaction to Lord Mauleverer, for the space of a fortnight, so that he naturally began to feel his love for Lucy gradually wearing away, by absence and other ties; but just as the triumph of time over passion was growing decisive, the lady left Bath in company with a tall guardsman, and Mauleverer received Brandon's letter. These two events recalled our excellent lover to a sense of his allegiance; and there being now at Bath no particular attraction to counterbalance the ardour of his affection, Lord Mauleverer ordered the horses to his carriage, and attended only by his valet, set out for London.

Nothing, perhaps, could convey a better portrait of the world's spoiled darling than a sight of Lord Mauleverer's thin, fastidious features, peering forth through the closed window of his luxurious travelling-chariot; the rest of the outer man being carefully enveloped in furs, half-a-dozen novels strewn the seat of the carriage, and a lean French dog, exceedingly like its master, sniffing in vain for the fresh air, which, to the imagination of Mauleverer, was peopled with all sorts of asthmas and catarrhs! Mauleverer got out of his carriage at Salisbury, to stretch his limbs, and to amuse himself with a cutlet. Our nobleman was well known

on the roads; and as nobody could be more affable, he was equally popular. The officious landlord bustled into the room, to wait himself upon his lordship and to tell all the news of the place.

"Well, Mr. Cheerly," said Mauleverer, bestowing a penetrating glance on his cutlet, "the bad times, I see, have not ruined your cook."

"Indeed, my lord, your lordship is very good, and the times, indeed, are very bad, — very bad indeed. Is there enough gravy? Perhaps your lordship will try the pickled onions?"

"The what? Onions! — oh! ah! nothing can be better; but I never touch them. So, are the roads good?"

"Your lordship has, I hope, found them good to Salisbury?"

"Ah! I believe so. Oh! to be sure, excellent to Salisbury. But how are they to London? We have had wet weather lately, I think!"

"No, my lord. *Here* the weather has been dry as a bone."

"Or a cutlet!" muttered Mauleverer; and the host continued, —

"As for the roads themselves, my lord, so far as the roads are concerned, they are pretty good, my lord; but I can't say as how there is not something about them that might be mended."

"By no means improbable! You mean the inns and the turnpikes?" rejoined Mauleverer.

"Your lordship is pleased to be facetious; no! I meant something worse than them."

"What! the cooks?"

"No, my lord, the highwaymen!"

"The highwaymen! indeed?" said Mauleverer, anxiously; for he had with him a case of diamonds, which at that time were on grand occasions often the ornaments of a gentleman's dress, in the shape of buttons, buckles, etc. He had also a tolerably large sum of ready money about him, — a blessing he had lately begun to find very rare. "By the way, the rascals robbed me before on this very road. My pistols shall be *loaded* this time. Mr. Cheerly, you had better order the horses; one may as well escape the nightfall."

"Certainly, my lord, certainly. — Jem, the horses immediately! — Your lordship will have another cutlet?"

"Not a morsel!"

"A tart?"

"A dev—! not for the world!"

"Bring the cheese, John!"

"Much obliged to you, Mr. Cheerly, but I have dined; and if I have not done justice to your good cheer, thank yourself and the highwaymen. Where do these highwaymen attack one?"

"Why, my lord, the neighbourhood of Reading is, I believe, the worst part; but they are very troublesome all the way to Salthill."

"Damnation! the very neighbourhood in which the knaves robbed me before! You may well call them *troublesome*! Why the deuce don't the police clear the country of such a movable species of trouble?"

"Indeed, my lord, I don't know; but they say as how Captain Lovett, the famous robber, be one of the set; and nobody can catch him, I fear!"

"Because, I suppose, the dog has the sense to bribe as well as bully. What is the general number of these ruffians?"

"Why, my lord, sometimes one, sometimes two, but seldom more than three."

Mauleverer drew himself up. "My dear diamonds and my pretty purse!" thought he; "I may save you yet!"

"Have you been long plagued with the fellows?" he asked, after a pause, as he was paying his bill.

"Why, my lord, we have and we have not. I fancy as how they have a sort of a haunt near Reading, for sometimes they are intolerable just about there, and sometimes they are quiet for months together! For instance, my lord, we thought them all gone some time ago; but lately they have regularly stopped every one, though I hear as how they have cleared no great booty as yet."

Here the waiter announced the horses, and Mauleverer slowly re-entered his carriage, among the bows and smiles of the charmed spirits of the hostelry.

During the daylight Mauleverer, who was naturally of a gallant and fearless temper, thought no more of the highway-men, — a species of danger so common at that time that men almost considered it disgraceful to suffer the dread of it to be a cause of delay on the road. Travellers seldom deemed it best to lose time in order to save money; and they carried with them a stout heart and a brace of pistols, instead of sleeping all night on the road. Mauleverer, rather a *preux chevalier*, was precisely of this order of wayfarers; and a night at an inn, when it was possible to avoid it, was to him, as to most rich Englishmen, a tedious torture zealously to be shunned. It never, therefore, entered into the head of our excellent nobleman, despite his experience, that his diamonds and his purse might be saved from all danger if he would consent to deposit them, with his own person, at some place of hospitable reception; nor, indeed, was it till he was within a stage of Reading, and the twilight had entirely closed in, that he troubled his head much on the matter. But while the horses were putting to, he summoned the postboys to him; and after regarding their countenances with the eye of a man accustomed to read physiognomies, he thus eloquently addressed them, —

“Gentlemen, I am informed that there is some danger of being robbed between this town and Salthill. Now, I beg to inform you that I think it next to impossible for four horses, properly directed, to be stopped by less than four men. To that number I shall probably yield; to a less number I shall most assuredly give nothing but bullets. You understand me?”

The post-boys grinned, touched their hats; and Mauleverer slowly continued, —

“If, therefore, — mark me! — one, two, or three men stop your horses, and I find that the use of your whips and spurs are ineffectual in releasing the animals from the hold of the robbers, I intend with these pistols — you observe them! — to shoot at the gentlemen who detain you; but as, though I am generally a dead shot, my eyesight wavers a little in the dark, I think it very possible that I may have the misfortune to

shoot *you*, gentlemen, instead of the robbers! You see the rascals will be close by you, sufficiently so to put you in jeopardy, unless indeed you knock them down with the butt-end of your whips. I merely mention this, that you may be prepared. Should such a mistake occur, you need not be uneasy beforehand, for I will take every possible care of your widows; should it not, and should we reach Salthill in safety, I intend to testify my sense of the excellence of your driving by a present of ten guineas apiece! Gentlemen, I have done with you. I give you my honour that I am serious in what I have said to you. Do me the favour to mount."

Mauleverer then called his favourite servant, who sat in the dickey in front (rumble-tumbles not being then in use).

"Smoothson," said he, "the last time we were attacked on this very road, you behaved damnably. See that you do better this time, or it may be the worse for you. *You* have pistols to-night about you, eh? Well, that's right! And you are sure they're loaded? Very well! Now, then, if we are stopped, don't lose a moment. Jump down, and fire one of your pistols at the first robber. Keep the other for a *sure* aim. One shot is to intimidate, the second to slay. You comprehend? *My* pistols are in excellent order, I suppose. Lend me the ramrod. So, so! No trick this time!"

"They would kill a fly, my lord, provided your lordship fired straight upon it."

"I do not doubt you," said Mauleverer; "light the lanterns, and tell the postboys to drive on."

It was a frosty and tolerably clear night. The dusk of the twilight had melted away beneath the moon which had just risen, and the hoary rime glittered from the bushes and the sward, breaking into a thousand diamonds as it caught the rays of the stars. On went the horses briskly, their breath steaming against the fresh air, and their hoofs sounding cheerily on the hard ground. The rapid motion of the carriage, the bracing coolness of the night, and the excitement occasioned by anxiety and the forethought of danger, all conspired to stir the languid blood of Lord Mauleverer into a vigorous and exhilarated sensation, natural in youth to his

character, but utterly contrary to the nature he had imbibed from the customs of his manhood.

He felt his pistols, and his hands trembled a little as he did so, — not the least from fear, but from that restlessness and eagerness peculiar to nervous persons placed in a new situation.

“In this country,” said he to himself, “I have been only once robbed in the course of my life. It was then a little my fault; for before I took to my pistols, I should have been certain they were loaded. To-night I shall be sure to avoid a similar blunder; and my pistols have an eloquence in their barrels which is exceedingly moving. Humph, another milestone! These fellows drive well; but we are entering a pretty-looking spot for Messieurs the disciples of Robin Hood!”

It was, indeed, a picturesque spot by which the carriage was now rapidly whirling. A few miles from Maidenhead, on the Henley Road, our readers will probably remember a small tract of forest-like land, lying on either side of the road. To the left the green waste bears away among the trees and bushes; and one skilled in the country may pass from that spot, through a landscape as little tenanted as green Sherwood was formerly, into the chains of wild common and deep beech-woods which border a certain portion of Oxfordshire, and contrast so beautifully the general characteristics of that county.

At the time we speak of, the country was even far wilder than it is now; and just on that point where the Henley and the Reading roads unite was a spot (communicating then with the waste land we have described), than which, perhaps, few places could be more adapted to the purposes of such true men as have recourse to the primary law of nature. Certain it was that at this part of the road Mauleverer looked more anxiously from his window than he had hitherto done, and apparently the increased earnestness of his survey was not altogether without meeting its reward.

About a hundred yards to the left, three dark objects were just discernible in the shade; a moment more, and the objects

emerging grew into the forms of three men, well mounted, and riding at a brisk trot.

"Only three!" thought Mauleverer, "that is well;" and leaning from the front window with a pistol in either hand, Mauleverer cried out to the postboys in a stern tone, "Drive on, and recollect what I told you! — Remember!" he added to his servant. The postboys scarcely looked round; but their spurs were buried in their horses, and the animals flew on like lightning.

The three strangers made a halt, as if in conference; their decision was prompt. Two wheeled round from their comrade, and darted at full gallop by the carriage. Mauleverer's pistol was already protruded from the front window, when to his astonishment, and to the utter baffling of his ingenious admonition to his drivers, he beheld the two postboys knocked from their horses one after the other with a celerity that scarcely allowed him an exclamation; and before he had recovered his self-possession, the horses taking fright (and their fright being skilfully taken advantage of by the highwaymen), the carriage was fairly whirled into a ditch on the right side of the road, and upset. Meanwhile Smoothson had leaped from his station in the front; and having fired, though without effect, at the third robber, who approached menacingly towards him, he gained the time to open the carriage door and extricate his master.

The moment Mauleverer found himself on *terra firma*, he prepared his courage for offensive measures; and he and Smoothson, standing side by side in front of the unfortunate vehicle, presented no unformidable aspect to the enemy. The two robbers who had so decisively rid themselves of the postboys acted with no less determination towards the horses. One of them dismounted, cut the traces, and suffered the plunging quadrupeds to go whither they listed. This measure was not, however, allowed to be taken with impunity; a ball from Mauleverer's pistol passed through the hat of the highwayman with an aim so slightly erring that it whizzed among the locks of the astounded hero with a sound that sent a terror to his heart, no less from a blow of his head than from

anxiety for his hair. The shock staggered him for a moment; and a second shot from the hands of Maulevére would have probably finished his earthly career, had not the third robber, who had hitherto remained almost inactive, thrown himself from his horse, which, tutored to such docility, remained perfectly still, and advancing with a bold step and a levelled pistol towards Maulevére and his servant, said in a resolute voice, "Gentlemen, it is useless to struggle; we are well armed, and resolved on effecting our purpose. Your persons shall be safe if you lay down your arms, and also such part of your property as you may particularly wish to retain; but if you resist, I cannot answer for your lives!"

Maulevére had listened patiently to this speech in order that he might have more time for adjusting his aim. His reply was a bullet, which grazed the side of the speaker and tore away the skin, without inflicting any more dangerous wound. Muttering a curse upon the error of his aim, and resolute to the last when his blood was once up, Maulevére backed one pace, drew his sword, and threw himself into the attitude of a champion well skilled in the use of the instrument he wore.

But that incomparable personage was in a fair way of ascertaining what happiness in the world to come is reserved for a man who has spared no pains to make himself comfortable in this. For the two first and most active robbers having finished the achievement of the horses, now approached Maulevére; and the taller of them, still indignant at the late peril to his hair, cried out in a stentorian voice, —

"By Jove! you old fool, if you don't throw down your toasting-fork, I'll be the death of you!"

The speaker suited the action to the word by cocking an immense pistol. Maulevére stood his ground; but Smoothson retreated, and stumbling against the wheel of the carriage, fell backward; the next instant, the second highwayman had possessed himself of the valet's pistols, and, quietly seated on the fallen man's stomach, amused himself by inspecting the contents of the domestic's pockets. Maulevére was now alone; and his stubbornness so enraged the tall bully that

his hand was already on his trigger, when the third robber, whose side Mauleverer's bullet had grazed, thrust himself between the two.

"Hold, Ned!" said he, pushing back his comrade's pistol. "And you, my lord, whose rashness ought to cost you your life, learn that men can rob generously." So saying, with one dexterous stroke from the robber's riding-whip, Mauleverer's sword flew upwards, and alighted at the distance of ten yards from its owner.

"Approach now," said the victor to his comrades. "Rifle the carriage, and with all despatch!"

The tall highwayman hastened to execute this order; and the lesser one having satisfactorily finished the inquisition into Mr. Smoothson's pockets, drew forth from his own pouch a tolerably thick rope; with this he tied the hands of the prostrate valet, moralizing as he wound the rope round and round the wrists of the fallen man, in the following edifying strain:—

"Lie still, sir, — lie still, I beseech you! All wise men are fatalists; and no proverb is more pithy than that which says, 'What can't be cured must be endured.' Lie still, I tell you! Little, perhaps, do you think that you are performing one of the noblest functions of humanity; yes, sir, you are filling the pockets of the destitute; and by my present action I am securing you from any weakness of the flesh likely to impede so praiseworthy an end, and so hazard the excellence of your action. There, sir, your hands are tight, — lie still and reflect."

As he said this, with three gentle applications of his feet, the moralist rolled Mr. Smoothson into the ditch, and hastened to join his lengthy comrade in his pleasing occupation.

In the interim Mauleverer and the third robber (who, in the true spirit of government, remained dignified and inactive while his followers plundered what *he* certainly designed to share, if not to monopolize) stood within a few feet of each other, face to face.

Mauleverer had now convinced himself that all endeavour to save his property was hopeless, and he had also the con-

solation of thinking he had done his best to defend it. He therefore bade all his thoughts return to the care of his person. He adjusted his fur collar around his neck with great *sang froid*, drew on his gloves, and, patting his terrified poodle, who sat shivering on its haunches with one paw raised and nervously trembling, he said, —

“You, sir, seem to be a civil person, and I really should have felt quite sorry if I had had the misfortune to wound you. You are not hurt, I trust. Pray, if I may inquire, how am I to proceed? My carriage is in the ditch, and my horses by this time are probably at the end of the world.”

“As for that matter,” said the robber, whose face, like those of his comrades, was closely masked in the approved fashion of highwaymen of that day, “I believe you will have to walk to Maidenhead, — it is not far, and the night is fine!”

“A very trifling hardship, indeed!” said Mauleverer, ironically; but his new acquaintance made no reply, nor did he appear at all desirous of entering into any further conversation with Mauleverer.

The earl, therefore, after watching the operations of the other robbers for some moments, turned on his heel, and remained humming an opera tune with dignified indifference until the pair had finished rifling the carriage, and seizing Mauleverer, proceeded to rifle *him*.

With a curled lip and a raised brow, that supreme personage suffered himself to be, as the taller robber expressed it, “cleaned out.” His watch, his rings, his purse, and his snuff-box, all went. It was long since the rascals had captured such a booty.

They had scarcely finished when the postboys, who had now begun to look about them, uttered a simultaneous cry, and at some distance a wagon was seen heavily approaching. Mauleverer really wanted his money, to say nothing of his diamonds; and so soon as he perceived assistance at hand, a new hope darted within him. His sword still lay on the ground; he sprang towards it, seized it, uttered a shout for help, and threw himself fiercely on the highwayman who had disarmed him; but the robber, warding off the blade with his whip,

retreated to his saddle, which he managed, despite of Maul-everer's lunges, to regain with impunity.

The other two had already mounted, and within a minute afterwards not a vestige of the trio was visible. "This is what may fairly be called *single blessedness!*" said Maul-everer, as, dropping his useless sword, he thrust his hands into his pockets.

Leaving our peerless peer to find his way to Maidenhead on foot, accompanied (to say nothing of the poodle, by one waggoner, two postboys, and the released Mr. Smoothson, all four charming him with their condolences, we follow with our story the steps of the three *alieni appetentes*.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE rogues were very merry on their booty. They said a thousand things that showed the wickedness of their morals. — *Gil Blas*.

They fixed on a spot where they made a cave, which was large enough to receive them and their horses. This cave was inclosed within a sort of thicket of bushes and brambles. From this station they used to issue, etc. — *Memoirs of Richard Turpin*.

It was not for several minutes after their flight had commenced that any conversation passed between the robbers. Their horses flew on like wind; and the country through which they rode presented to their speed no other obstacle than an occasional hedge, or a short cut through the thick-nesses of some leafless beechwood. The stars lent them a merry light, and the spirits of two of them at least were fully in sympathy with the exhilaration of the pace and the air. Perhaps, in the third, a certain presentiment that the present adventure would end less merrily than it had begun, conspired, with other causes of gloom, to check that exaltation of the blood which generally follows a successful exploit.

The path which the robbers took wound by the sides of long woods or across large tracts of uncultivated land; nor

did they encounter anything living by the road, save now and then a solitary owl, wheeling its gray body around the skirts of the bare woods, or occasionally troops of conies, pursuing their sports and enjoying their midnight food in the fields.

"Heavens!" cried the tall robber, whose incognito we need no longer preserve, and who, as our readers are doubtless aware, answered to the name of Pepper, — "heavens!" cried he, looking upward at the starry skies in a sort of ecstasy, "what a jolly life this is! Some fellows like hunting; d— it! what hunting is like the road? If there be sport in hunting down a nasty fox, how much more is there in hunting down a nice, clean nobleman's carriage! If there be joy in getting a brush, how much more is there in getting a purse! If it be pleasant to fly over a hedge in the broad daylight, hang me if it be not ten times finer sport to skim it by night, — here goes! Look how the hedges run away from us! and the silly old moon dances about, as if the sight of us put the good lady in spirits! Those old maids are always glad to have an eye upon such fine, dashing young fellows."

"Ay," cried the more erudite and sententious Augustus Tomlinson, roused by success from his usual philosophical sobriety; "no work is so pleasant as night-work, and the witches our ancestors burned were in the right to ride out on their broomsticks with the owls and the stars. We are their successors *now*, Ned. We are your true fly-by-nights!"

"Only," quoth Ned, "we are a cursed deal more clever than they were; for they played their game without being a bit the richer for it, and we — I say, Tomlinson, where the devil did you put that red morocco case?"

"Experience never enlightens the foolish," said Tomlinson, "or you would have known, without asking, that I had put it in the very safest pocket in my coat. 'Gad, how heavy it is!"

"Well," cried Pepper, "I can't say I wish it were lighter! Only think of our robbing my lord twice, and on the same road too!"

"I say, Lovett," exclaimed Tomlinson, "was it not odd that we should have stumbled upon our Bath friend so unceremo-

niously? Lucky for us that we are so strict in robbing in masks! He would not have thought the better of Bath company if he had seen our faces."

Lovett, or rather Clifford, had hitherto been silent. He now turned slowly in his saddle, and said: "As it was, the poor devil was very nearly despatched. Long Ned was making short work with him, if I had not interposed!"

"And why did you?" said Ned.

"Because I will have no killing; it is the curse of the noble art of our profession to have passionate professors like thee."

"Passionate!" repeated Ned. "Well, I am a little choleric, I own it; but that is not so great a fault on the road as it would be in housebreaking. I don't know a thing that requires so much coolness and self-possession as cleaning out a house from top to bottom, — quietly and civilly, mind you!"

"That is the reason, I suppose, then," said Augustus, "that you altogether renounced *that* career. Your first adventure was house breaking, I think I have heard you say. I confess it was a vulgar *début*, — not worthy of you!"

"No! Harry Cook seduced me; but the specimen I saw that night disgusted me of picking locks; it brings one in contact with such low companions. Only think, there was a merchant, a rag-merchant, one of the party!"

"Faugh!" said Tomlinson, in solemn disgust.

"Ay, you may well turn up your lip; I never broke into a house again."

"Who were your other companions?" asked Augustus.

"Only Harry Cook,¹ and a very singular woman —"

Here Ned's narrative was interrupted by a dark defile through a wood, allowing room for only one horseman at a time. They continued this gloomy path for several minutes, until at length it brought them to the brink of a large dell, overgrown with bushes, and spreading around somewhat in the form of a rude semicircle. Here the robbers dismounted, and led their reeking horses down the descent. Long Ned, who went first, paused at a cluster of bushes, which seemed so thick as to defy intrusion, but which, yielding on either

¹ A noted highwayman.

side to the experienced hand of the robber, presented what appeared the mouth of a cavern. A few steps along the passage of this gulf brought them to a door, which, even seen by torchlight, would have appeared so exactly similar in colour and material to the rude walls on either side as to have deceived any unsuspecting eye, and which, in the customary darkness brooding over it, might have remained for centuries undiscovered. Touching a secret latch, the door opened, and the robbers were in the secure precincts of the "Red Cave." It may be remembered that among the early studies of our exemplary hero the memoirs of Richard Turpin had formed a conspicuous portion; and it may also be remembered that in the miscellaneous adventures of that gentleman nothing had more delighted the juvenile imagination of the student than the description of the forest cave in which the gallant Turpin had been accustomed to conceal himself, his friend, his horse,

"And that sweet saint who lay by Turpin's side;"

or, to speak more domestically, the respectable Mrs. Turpin. So strong a hold, indeed, had that early reminiscence fixed upon our hero's mind, that no sooner had he risen to eminence among his friends than he had put the project of his childhood into execution. He had selected for the scene of his ingenuity an admirable spot. In a thinly peopled country, surrounded by commons and woods, and yet, as Mr. Robins would say if he had to dispose of it by auction, "within an easy ride" of populous and well-frequented roads, it possessed all the advantages of secrecy for itself and convenience for depredation. Very few of the gang, and those only who had been employed in its construction, were made acquainted with the secret of this cavern; and as our adventurers rarely visited it, and only on occasions of urgent want or secure concealment, it had continued for more than two years undiscovered and unsuspected.

The cavern, originally hollowed by nature, owed but little to the decorations of art; nevertheless, the roughness of the walls was concealed by a rude but comfortable arras of matting; four or five of such seats as the robbers themselves could construct were drawn around a small but bright wood-fire,

which, as there was no chimney, spread a thin volume of smoke over the apartment. The height of the cave, added to the universal reconciler (custom), prevented, however, this evil from being seriously unpleasant; and, indeed, like the tenants of an Irish cabin, perhaps the inmates attached a degree of comfort to a circumstance which was coupled with their dearest household associations. A table, formed of a board coarsely planed, and supported by four legs of irregular size, made equal by the introduction of blocks or wedges between the legs and the floor, stood warming its uncouth self by the fire. At one corner a covered cart made a conspicuous article of furniture, no doubt useful either in conveying plunder or provisions; beside the wheels were carelessly thrown two or three coarse carpenter's tools, and the more warlike utilities of a blunderbuss, a rifle, and two broadswords. In the other corner was an open cupboard, containing rows of pewter platters, mugs, etc. Opposite the fireplace, which was to the left of the entrance, an excavation had been turned into a dormitory; and fronting the entrance was a pair of broad, strong wooden steps, ascending to a large hollow about eight feet from the ground. This was the entrance to the stables; and as soon as their owners released the reins of the horses, the docile animals proceeded one by one leisurely up the steps, in the manner of quadrupeds educated at the public seminary of Astley's, and disappeared within the aperture.

These steps, when drawn up, — which, however, from their extreme clumsiness, required the united strength of two ordinary men, and was not that instantaneous work which it should have been, — made the place above a tolerably strong hold; for the wall was perfectly perpendicular and level, and it was only by placing his hands upon the ledge, and so lifting himself gymnastically upward, that an active assailant could have reached the eminence, — a work which defenders equally active, it may easily be supposed, would not be likely to allow.

This upper cave — for our robbers paid more attention to their horses than themselves, as the nobler animals of the two species — was evidently fitted up with some labour. The

stalls were rudely divided, the litter of dry fern was clean, troughs were filled with oats, and a large tub had been supplied from a pond at a little distance. A cart-harness and some old wagoners' frocks were fixed on pegs to the wall; while at the far end of these singular stables was a door strongly barred, and only just large enough to admit the body of a man. The confederates had made it an express law never to enter their domain by this door, or to use it, except for the purpose of escape, should the cave ever be attacked; in which case, while one or two defended the entrance from the inner cave, another might unbar the door, and as it opened upon the thickest part of the wood, through which with great ingenuity a labyrinthine path had been cut, not easily tracked by ignorant pursuers, these precautions of the highwaymen had provided a fair hope of at least a temporary escape from any invading enemies.

Such were the domestic arrangements of the Red Cave; and it will be conceded that at least some skill had been shown in the choice of the spot, if there were a lack of taste in its adornments.

While the horses were performing their nightly ascent, our three heroes, after securing the door, made at once to the fire. And there, O reader! they were greeted in welcome by one — an old and revered acquaintance of thine — whom in such a scene it will equally astound and wound thee to re-behold.

Know, then — But first we will describe to thee the occupation and the garb of the august personage to whom we allude. Bending over a large gridiron, daintily bespread with steaks of the fatted rump, the INDIVIDUAL stood, with his right arm bared above the elbow, and his right hand grasping that mimic trident known unto gastronomers by the monosyllable "fork." His wigless head was adorned with a cotton nightcap. His upper vestment was discarded, and a whitish apron flowed gracefully down his middle man. His stockings were ungartered, and permitted between the knee and the calf interesting glances of the rude carnal. One list shoe and one of leathern manufacture cased his ample feet. Enterprise, or the noble glow of his present culinary profes-

sion, spread a yet rosier blush over a countenance early tinged by generous libations, and from beneath the curtain of his pallid eyelashes his large and rotund orbs gleamed dazlingly on the new comers. Such, O reader! was the aspect and the occupation of the venerable man whom we have long since taught thee to admire; such, alas for the mutabilities of earth! was — A new chapter only can contain the name.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Caliban. Hast thou not dropped from heaven?

Tempest.

PETER MACGRAWLER !

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

GOD bless our King and Parliament,

And send he may make such knaves repent !

Loyal Songs against the Rump Parliament.

Ho, treachery ! my guards, my cimeter !

BYRON.

WHEN the irreverent Mr. Pepper had warmed his hands sufficiently to be able to transfer them from the fire, he lifted the right palm, and with an indecent jocularly of spirits, accosted the *ci-devant* ornament of "The Asinæum" with a sounding slap on his back, or some *such* part of his conformation.

"Ah, old boy!" said he, "is this the way you keep house for us? A fire not large enough to roast a nit, and a supper too small to fatten him beforehand! But how the deuce should you know how to provender for gentlemen? You thought you were in Scotland, I'll be bound!"

"Perhaps he did when he looked upon you, Ned!" said Tomlinson, gravely; "'tis but rarely out of Scotland that a man can see so big a rogue in so little a compass!"

Mr. MacGrawler, into whose eyes the palmistry of Long Ned had brought tears of sincere feeling, and who had hitherto been rubbing the afflicted part, now grumbled forth, —

"You may say what you please, Mr. Pepper, but it is not often in my country that men of genius are seen performing the part of cook to robbers!"

"No!" quoth Tomlinson, "they are performing the more profitable part of robbers to cooks, eh!"

"Damme, you're out," cried Long Ned, — "for in that country there are either no robbers, because there is nothing to rob; or the inhabitants are all robbers, who have plundered one another, and made away with the booty!"

"May the de'il catch thee!" said MacGrawler, stung to the quick, — for, like all Scots, he was a patriot; much on the

same principle as a woman who has the worst children makes the best mother.

"The de'il," said Ned, mimicking the "silver sound," as Sir W. Scott had been pleased facetiously to call the "mountain tongue" (the Scots in general seem to think it is silver, they keep it so carefully) "the de'il,—*MacDeil*, you mean,—sure, the gentleman must have been a Scotchman!"

The sage grinned in spite; but remembering the patience of Epictetus when a slave, and mindful also of the strong arm of Long Ned, he curbed his temper, and turned the beefsteaks with his fork.

"Well, Ned," said Augustus, throwing himself into a chair, which he drew to the fire, while he gently patted the huge limbs of Mr. Pepper, as if to admonish him that they were not so transparent as glass, "let us look at the fire; and, by the by, it is your turn to see to the horses."

"Plague on it!" cried Ned; "it is always my turn, I think. Holla, you Scot of the pot! can't you prove that I groomed the beasts last? I'll give you a crown to do it."

The wise MacGrawler pricked up his ears.

"A crown!" said he, — "a crown! Do you mean to insult me, Mr. Pepper? But, to be sure, you did see to the horses last; and this worthy gentleman, Mr. Tomlinson, must remember it too."

"How, I!" cried Augustus; "you are mistaken, and I'll give you half a guinea to prove it."

MacGrawler opened his eyes larger and larger, even as you may see a small circle in the water widen into enormity, if you disturb the equanimity of the surface by the obtrusion of a foreign substance.

"Half a guinea!" said he; "nay, nay, you joke. I'm not mercenary. You think I am! Pooh, pooh! you are mistaken; I'm a man who means *weel*, a man of veracity, and will speak the truth in spite of all the half-guineas in the world. But certainly, now I begin to think of it, Mr. Tomlinson did see to the creatures last; and, Mr. Pepper, it is your turn."

"A very Daniel!" said Tomlinson, chuckling in his usual dry manner. "Ned, don't you hear the horses neigh?"

"Oh, hang the horses!" said the volatile Pepper, forgetting everything else, as he thrust his hands in his pockets, and felt the gains of the night; "let us first look to our winnings!"

So saying, he marched towards the table, and emptied his pockets thereon. Tomlinson, nothing loath, followed the example. Heavens! what exclamations of delight issued from the scoundrels' lips, as, one by one, they inspected their new acquisitions!

"Here's a magnificent creature!" cried Ned, handling that superb watch studded with jewels which the poor earl had once before unavailingly redeemed, — "a repeater, by Jove!"

"I hope not," said the phlegmatic Augustus; "repeaters will not tell well for your conversation, Ned! But, powers that be! look at this ring, — a diamond of the first water!"

"Oh, the sparkler! it makes one's mouth water as much as itself. 'Sdeath, here's a precious box for a sneezer, — a picture inside, and rubies outside! The old fellow had excellent taste; it would charm him to see how pleased we are with his choice of jewelry!"

"Talking of jewelry," said Tomlinson, "I had almost forgotten the morocco case. Between you and me, I imagine we have a prize there; it looks like a jewel casket!"

So saying, the robber opened that case which on many a gala day had lent lustre to the polished person of Mauleverer. Oh, reader, the burst of rapture that ensued! Imagine it! we cannot express it. Like the Grecian painter, we drop a veil over emotions too deep for words.

"But here," said Pepper, when they had almost exhausted their transports at sight of the diamonds, — "here's a purse, — fifty guineas! And what's this? Notes, by Jupiter! We must change them to-morrow before they are stopped. Curse those fellows at the Bank! they are always imitating us; we stop their money, and they don't lose a moment in stopping it too. Three hundred pounds! Captain, what say you to our luck?"

Clifford had sat gloomily looking on during the operations of the robbers; he now, assuming a correspondent cheerfulness of manner, made a suitable reply, and after some general conversation the work of division took place.

"We are the best arithmeticians in the world," said Augustus, as he pouched his share; "addition, subtraction, division, reduction, — we have them all as pat as 'The Tutor's Assistant;' and, what is better, we make them all applicable to the *Rule of Three*."

"You have left out multiplication!" said Clifford, smiling.

"Ah! because that works differently. The other rules apply to the specie-s of the kingdom; but as for multiplication, we multiply, I fear, no species but our own!"

"Fie, gentlemen!" said MacGrawler, austere, — for there is a wonderful decorum in your true Scotsmen. "Actions are trifles; nothing can be cleaner than their *words*!"

"Oh, you thrust in *your* wisdom, do you?" said Ned. "I suppose you want your part of the booty!"

"Part!" said the subtilizing Tomlinson. "He has nine times as many parts as we have already. Is he not a critic, and has he not the parts of speech at his fingers' end?"

"Nonsense!" said MacGrawler, instinctively holding up his hands, with the fork dropping between the outstretched fingers of the right palm.

"Nonsense yourself," cried Ned; "*you* have a share in what you never took! A pretty fellow, truly! Mind your business, Mr. Scot, and fork nothing but the beefsteaks!"

With this Ned turned to the stables, and soon disappeared among the horses; but Clifford, eying the disappointed and eager face of the culinary sage, took ten guineas from his own share, and pushed them towards his quondam tutor.

"There!" said he, emphatically.

"Nay, nay," grunted MacGrawler; "I don't want the money, — it is my way to scorn such dross!" So saying, he pocketed the coins, and turned, muttering to himself, to the renewal of his festive preparations.

Meanwhile a whispered conversation took place between Augustus and the captain, and continued till Ned returned.

"And the night's viands smoked along the board!"

Souls of Don Raphael and Ambrose Lamela, what a charming thing it is to be a rogue for a little time! How merry

men are when they have cheated their brethren! Your innocent milksops never made so jolly a supper as did our heroes of the way. Clifford, perhaps acted a part, but the hilarity of his comrades was unfeigned. It was a delicious contrast, — the boisterous “ha, ha!” of Long Ned, and the secret, dry, calculating chuckle of Augustus Tomlinson. It was Rabelais against Voltaire. They united only in the objects of their jests, and foremost of those objects (wisdom is ever the butt of the frivolous!) was the great Peter MacGrawler.

The graceless dogs were especially merry upon the subject of the sage’s former occupation.

“Come, Mac, you carve this ham,” said Ned; “you have had practice in cutting up.”

The learned man whose name was thus disrespectfully abbreviated proceeded to perform what he was bid. He was about to sit down for that purpose, when Tomlinson slyly subtracted his chair, — the sage fell.

“No jests at MacGrawler,” said the malicious Augustus; “whatever be his faults as a critic, you see that he is well grounded, and he gets at once to the bottom of a subject. Mac, suppose your next work be entitled *a Tail of Woe!*”

Men who have great minds are rarely flexible, — they do not take a jest readily; so it was with MacGrawler. He rose in a violent rage; and had the robbers been more penetrating than they condescended to be, they might have noticed something dangerous in his eye. As it was, Clifford, who had often before been the protector of his tutor, interposed in his behalf, drew the sage a seat near to himself, and filled his plate for him. It was interesting to see this deference from Power to Learning! It was Alexander doing homage to Aristotle!

“There is only one thing I regret,” cried Ned, with his mouth full, “about the old lord, — it was a thousand pities we did not make him dance! I remember the day, Captain, when you would have insisted on it. What a merry fellow you were once! Do you recollect, one bright moonlight night, just like the present, for instance, when we were doing duty

near Staines, how you swore every person we stopped, above fifty years old, should dance a minuet with you?"

"Ay!" added Augustus, "and the first was a bishop in a white wig. Faith, how stiffly his lordship jigged it! And how gravely Lovett bowed to him, with his hat off, when it was all over, and returned him his watch and ten guineas, — it was worth the sacrifice!"

"And the next was an old maid of quality," said Ned, "as lean as a lawyer. Don't you remember how she curvetted?"

"To be sure," said Tomlinson; "and you very wittily called her a *hop-pole*!"

"How delighted she was with the captain's suavity! When he gave her back her earrings and *aigrette*, she bade him with a tender sigh keep them for her sake, — ha! ha!"

"And the third was a beau!" cried Augustus; "and Lovett surrendered his right of partnership to me. Do you recollect how I danced his beauship into the ditch? Ah! we were mad fellows then; but we get sated — *blasés*, as the French say — as we grow older!"

"We look only to the main chance now," said Ned.

"Avarice supersedes enterprise," added the sententious Augustus.

"And our captain takes to wine with an *h* after the *w*!" continued the metaphorical Ned.

"Come, we are melancholy," said Tomlinson, tossing off a bumper. "Methinks we are *really* growing old, we shall repent soon, and the next step will be — hanging!"

"Fore Gad!" said Ned, helping himself, "don't be so croaking. There are two classes of maligned gentry, who should always be particular to avoid certain colours in dressing; I hate to see a true boy in black, or a devil in blue. But here 's my last glass to-night! I am confoundedly sleepy, and we rise early to-morrow."

"Right, Ned," said Tomlinson; "give us a song before you retire, and let it be that one which Lovett composed the last time we were here."

Ned, always pleased with an opportunity of displaying himself, cleared his voice and complied.

A DITTY FROM SHERWOOD.

I.

Laugh with us at the prince and the palace,
 In the wild wood-life there is better cheer;
 Would you hoard your mirth from your neighbour's malice
 Gather it up in our garners here.
 Some kings their wealth from their subjects wring,
 While by their foes they the poorer wax;
 Free go the men of the wise wood-king,
 And it is only our foes we tax.
 Leave the cheats of trade to the shrewd gude-wife:
 Let the old be knaves at ease;
 Away with the tide of that dashing life
 Which is stirred by a constant breeze!

II.

Laugh with us when you hear deceiving
 And solemn rogues tell you what knaves we be;
 Commerce and law have a method of thieving
 Worse than a stand at the outlaw's tree.
 Say, will the maiden we love despise
 Gallants at least to each other true?
 I grant that we trample on legal ties,
 But I have heard that Love scorns them too,
 Courage, then, — courage, ye jolly boys,
 Whom the fool with the knavish rates:
 Oh! who that is loved by the world enjoys
 Half as much as the man it hates?

"Bravissimo, Ned!" cried Tomlinson, rapping the table;
 "bravissimo! Your voice is superb to-night, and your song
 admirable. Really, Lovett, it does your poetical genius great
 credit; quite philosophical, upon my honour."

"Bravissimo!" said MacGrawler, nodding his head awfully.
 "Mr. Pepper's voice is as sweet as a bagpipe! Ah! such a song
 would have been invaluable to 'The Asinæum,' when I had
 the honour to —"

"Be Vicar of *Bray* to that establishment," interrupted
 Tomlinson. "Pray, MacGrawler, why do they call Edinburgh
 the Modern Athens?"

"Because of the learned and great men it produces,"
 returned MacGrawler, with conscious pride.

"Pooh! pooh! — you are thinking of *ancient* Athens. Your city is called the *modern* Athens because you are all so like the modern Athenians, — the greatest scoundrels imaginable, unless travellers belie them."

"Nay," interrupted Ned, who was softened by the applause of the critic, "Mac is a good fellow, spare him. Gentlemen, your health. I am going to bed, and I suppose you will not tarry long behind me."

"Trust us for that," answered Tomlinson; "the captain and I will consult on the business of the morrow, and join you in the twinkling of a bedpost, as it has been shrewdly expressed."

Ned yawned his last "good-night," and disappeared within the dormitory. MacGrawler, yawning also, but with a graver yawn, as became his wisdom, betook himself to the duty of removing the supper paraphernalia: after bustling soberly about for some minutes, he let down a press-bed in the corner of the cave (for he did not sleep in the robbers' apartment), and undressing himself, soon appeared buried in the bosom of Morpheus. But the chief and Tomlinson, drawing their seats nearer to the dying embers, defied the slothful god, and entered with low tones into a close and anxious commune.

"So, then," said Augustus, "now that you have realized sufficient funds for your purpose, you will really desert us? Have you well weighed the *pros* and *cons*? Remember that nothing is so dangerous to our state as reform; the moment a man grows honest, the gang forsake him; the magistrate misses his fee; the informer peaches; and the recusant hangs."

"I have well weighed all this," answered Clifford, "and have decided on my course. I have only tarried till my means could assist my will. With my share of our present and late booty, I shall betake myself to the Continent. Prussia gives easy trust and ready promotion to all who will enlist in her service. But this language, my dear friend, seems strange from your lips. Surely you will join me in my separation from the *corps*? What! you shake your head! Are you not the same Tomlinson who at Bath agreed with me that we were in danger from the envy of our comrades, and that retreat had

become necessary to our safety? Nay, was not this your main argument for our matrimonial expedition?"

"Why, look you, dear Lovett," said Augustus, "we are all blocks of matter, formed from the atoms of custom; in other words, we are a mechanism, to which habit is the spring. What could I do in an honest career? I am many years older than you. I have lived as a rogue till I have no other nature than roguery. I doubt if I should not be a coward were I to turn soldier. I am sure I should be the most consummate of rascals were I to affect to be honest. No: I mistook myself when I talked of separation. I must e'en jog on with my old comrades, and in my old ways, till I jog into the noose hempen or — melancholy alternative! — the noose matrimonial."

"This is mere folly," said Clifford, from whose nervous and masculine mind habits were easily shaken. "We have not for so many years discarded all the servile laws of others, to be the abject slaves of our own weaknesses. Come, my dear fellow, rouse yourself. Heaven knows, were I to succumb to the feebleness of my own heart, I should be lost indeed. And perhaps, wrestle I ever so stoutly, I do not wrestle away that which clings within me, and will kill me, though by inches. But let us not be cravens, and suffer fate to drown us rather than swim. In a word, fly with me ere it be too late. A smuggler's vessel waits me off the coast of Dorset: in three days from this I sail. Be my companion. We can both rein a fiery horse, and wield a good sword. As long as men make war one against another, those accomplishments will prevent their owner from starving, or —"

"If employed in the field, not the road," interrupted Tomlinson, with a smile, — "from hanging. But it cannot be! I wish you all joy, all success in your career. You are young, bold, and able; and you always had a loftier spirit than I have. Knave I am, and knave I must be to the end of the chapter!"

"As you will," said Clifford, who was not a man of many words, but he spoke with reluctance: "if so, I must seek my fortune alone."

"When do you leave us?" asked Tomlinson.

"To-morrow, before noon. I shall visit London for a few hours, and then start at once for the coast."

"London!" exclaimed Tomlinson; "what, the very den of danger? Pooh! you do not know what you say: or do you think it filial to caress Mother Lobkins before you depart?"

"Not that," answered Clifford. "I have already ascertained that she is above the reach of all want; and her days, poor soul! cannot, I fear, be many. In all probability she would scarcely recognize me; for her habits cannot much have improved her memory. Would I could say as much for her neighbours! Were I to be seen in the purlieus of low thievery, you know, as well as I do, that some stealer of kerchiefs would turn informer against the notorious Captain Lovett."

"What, then, takes you to town? Ah! you turn away your face. I guess! Well, Love has ruined many a hero before; may you not be the worse for his godship!"

Clifford did not answer, and the conversation made a sudden and long pause; Tomlinson broke it.

"Do you know, Lovett," said he, "though I have as little heart as most men, yet I feel for you more than I could have thought it possible. I would fain join you; there is devilish good tobacco in Germany, I believe; and, after all, there is not so much difference between the life of a thief and of a soldier."

"Do profit by so sensible a remark," said Clifford. "Reflect! how certain of destruction is the path you now tread; the gallows and the hulks are the only goals!"

"The prospects are not pleasing, I allow," said Tomlinson; "nor is it desirable to be preserved for another century in the immortality of a glass case in Surgeons' Hall, grinning from ear to ear, as if one had made the merriest finale imaginable. Well! I will sleep on it, and you shall have my answer to-morrow; but poor Ned?"

"Would he not join us?"

"Certainly not; his neck is made for a rope, and his mind for the Old Bailey. There is no hope for him; yet he is an excellent fellow. We must not even tell him of our meditated desertion."

"By no means. I shall leave a letter to our London chief; it will explain all. And now to bed. I look to your companionship as settled."

"Humph!" said Augustus Tomlinson.

So ended the conference of the robbers. About an hour after it had ceased, and when no sound save the heavy breath of Long Ned broke the stillness of the night, the intelligent countenance of Peter MacGrawler slowly elevated itself from the lonely pillow on which it had reclined.

By degrees the back of the sage stiffened into perpendicularity, and he sat for a few moments erect on his seat of honour, apparently in listening deliberation. Satisfied with the deep silence that, save the solitary interruption we have specified, reigned around, the learned disciple of Vatel rose gently from the bed, hurried on his clothes, stole on tiptoe to the door, unbarred it with a noiseless hand, and vanished. Sweet reader! while thou art wondering at his absence, suppose we account for his appearance.

One evening Clifford and his companion Augustus had been enjoying the rational amusement at Ranelagh, and were just leaving that celebrated place when they were arrested by a crowd at the entrance. That crowd was assembled round a pickpocket; and that pickpocket—O virtue, O wisdom, O Asinæum!—was Peter MacGrawler! We have before said that Clifford was possessed of a good mien and an imposing manner, and these advantages were at that time especially effectual in preserving our Orbilius from the pump. No sooner did Clifford recognize the magisterial face of the sapient Scot, than he boldly thrust himself into the middle of the crowd, and collaring the enterprising citizen who had collared MacGrawler, declared *himself* ready to vouch for the honesty of the very respectable person whose identity had evidently been so grossly mistaken. Augustus, probably foreseeing some ingenious *ruse* of his companion, instantly seconded the defence. The mob, who never descry any difference between impudence and truth, gave way; a constable came up, took part with the friend of two gentlemen so unexceptionally dressed; our friends walked off; the crowd repented of their

precipitation, and by way of amends ducked the gentleman whose pockets had been picked. It was in vain for him to defend himself, for he had an impediment in his speech; and Messieurs the mob, having ducked him once for his guilt, ducked him a second time for his embarrassment.

In the interim Clifford had withdrawn his quondam Mentor to the asylum of a coffee-house; and while MacGrawler's soul expanded itself by wine, he narrated the causes of his dilemma. It seems that that incomparable journal "The Asinæum," despite a series of most popular articles upon the writings of "Aulus Prudentius," to which were added an exquisite string of dialogues, written in a tone of broad humour, namely, broad Scotch (with Scotchmen it is all the same thing), despite these invaluable miscellanies, to say nothing of some glorious political articles, in which it was clearly proved to the satisfaction of the rich, that the less poor devils eat the better for their constitutions, — despite, we say, these great acquisitions to British literature, "The Asinuæm" tottered, fell, buried its bookseller, and crushed its author. MacGrawler only, — escaping, like Theodore from the enormous helmet of Otranto, — MacGrawler only survived. "Love," says Sir Philip Sidney. "makes a man see better than a pair of spectacles." Love of life has a very different effect on the optics, — it makes a man woefully dim of inspection, and sometimes causes him to see his own property in another man's purse! This *deceptio visus*, did it impose upon Peter MacGrawler? He went to Ranelagh. Reader, thou knowest the rest!

Wine and the ingenuity of the robbers having extorted this narrative from MacGrawler, the barriers of superfluous delicacy were easily done away with.

Our heroes offered to the sage an introduction to their club; the offer was accepted; and MacGrawler, having been first made drunk, was next made a robber. The gang engaged him in various little matters, in which we grieve to relate that though his intentions were excellent, his success was so ill as thoroughly to enrage his employers; nay, they were about at one time, when they wanted to propitiate justice, to hand him over to the secular power, when Clifford interposed in

his behalf. From a robber the sage dwindled into a drudge; menial offices (the robbers, the lying rascals, declared that such offices were best fitted to the genius of his country!) succeeded to noble exploits, and the worst of robbers became the best of cooks. How vain is all wisdom but that of long experience! Though Clifford was a sensible and keen man, though he knew our sage to be a knave, he never dreamed he could be a traitor. He thought him too indolent to be malicious, and — short-sighted humanity! — too silly to be dangerous. He trusted the sage with the secret of the cavern; and Augustus, who was a bit of an epicure, submitted, though forebodingly, to the choice, because of the Scotchman's skill in broiling.

But MacGrawler, like Brutus, concealed a scheming heart under a stolid guise. The apprehension of the noted Lovett had become a matter of serious desire; the police was no longer to be bribed, nay, they were now eager to bribe. MacGrawler had watched his time, sold his chief, and was now on the road to Reading to meet and to guide to the cavern Mr. Nabbem of Bow Street and four of his attendants.

Having thus, as rapidly as we were able, traced the causes which brought so startlingly before your notice the most incomparable of critics, we now, reader, return to our robbers.

"Hist, Lovett!" said Tomlinson, half asleep, "methought I heard something in the outer cave."

"It is the Scot, I suppose," answered Clifford: "you saw, of course, to the door?"

"To be sure!" muttered Tomlinson, and in two minutes more he was asleep.

Not so Clifford: many and anxious thoughts kept him waking. At one while, when he anticipated the opening to a new career, somewhat of the stirring and high spirit which still moved amidst the guilty and confused habits of his mind made his pulse feverish and his limbs restless; at another time, an agonizing remembrance, — the remembrance of Lucy in all her charms, her beauty, her love, her tender and innocent heart, — Lucy all perfect, and lost to him forever, — banished every other reflection, and only left him the

sick sensation of despondency and despair. "What avails my struggle for a better name?" he thought. "Whatever my future lot, *she* can never share it. My punishment is fixed, — it is worse than a death of shame; it is a life without hope! Every moment I feel, and shall feel to the last, the pressure of a chain that may never be broken or loosened! And yet, fool that I am! I cannot leave this country without seeing her again, without telling her that I have *really* looked my last. But have I not *twice* told her that? Strange fatality! But twice have I spoken to her of love, and each time it was to tear myself from her at the moment of my confession. And even now something that I have no power to resist compels me to the same idle and weak indulgence. Does destiny urge me? Ay, perhaps to my destruction! Every hour a thousand deaths encompass me. I have now obtained all for which I seemed to linger. I have won, by a new crime, enough to bear me to another land, and to provide me there a soldier's destiny. I should not lose an hour in flight, yet I rush into the nest of my enemies, only for one unavailing word with her; and this, too, after I have already bade her farewell! *Is* this fate? If it be so, what matters it? I no longer care for a life which, after all, I should reform in vain if I could not reform it for her; yet—yet, selfish and lost that I am! will it be nothing to think hereafter that I have redeemed her from the disgrace of having loved an outcast and a felon? If I can obtain honour, will it not, in my own heart at least, — will it not reflect, however dimly and distantly, upon her?"

Such, bewildered, unsatisfactory, yet still steeped in the colours of that true love which raises even the lowest, were the midnight meditations of Clifford; they terminated, towards the morning, in an uneasy and fitful slumber. From this he was awakened by a loud yawn from the throat of Long Ned, who was always the earliest riser of his set.

"Hullo!" said he, "it is almost daybreak; and if we want to cash our notes and to move the old lord's jewels, we should already be on the start."

"A plague on you!" said Tomlinson, from under cover of his woollen nightcap; "it was but this instant that I was

dreaming you were going to be hanged, and now you wake me in the pleasantest part of the dream!"

"You be shot!" said Ned, turning one leg out of bed; "by the by, you took more than your share last night, for you owed me three guineas for our last game at cribbage! You'll please to pay me before we part to-day: short accounts make long friends!"

"However true that maxim may be," returned Tomlinson, "I know one much truer, — namely, long friends will make short accounts! You must ask Jack Ketch this day month if I'm wrong!"

"That's what *you* call wit, I suppose!" retorted Ned, as he now, struggling into his inexpressibles, felt his way into the outer cave.

"What, ho, Mac!" cried he, as he went, "stir those bobbins of thine, which thou art pleased to call legs; strike a light, and be d—d to you!"

"A light for *you*," said Tomlinson, profanely, as he reluctantly left his couch, "will indeed be a 'light to lighten the Gentiles!'"

"Why, Mac, Mac!" shouted Ned, "why don't you answer? faith, I think the Scot's dead!"

"Seize your men!—Yield, sirs!" cried a stern, sudden voice from the gloom; and at that instant two dark lanterns were turned, and their light streamed full upon the astounded forms of Tomlinson and his gaunt comrade! In the dark shade of the background four or five forms were also indistinctly visible; and the ray of the lanterns glimmered on the blades of cutlasses and the barrels of weapons still less easily resisted.

Tomlinson was the first to recover his self-possession. The light just gleamed upon the first step of the stairs leading to the stables, leaving the rest in shadow. He made one stride to the place beside the cart, where, we have said, lay some of the robbers' weapons; he had been anticipated, — the weapons were gone. The next moment Tomlinson had sprung up the steps.

"Lovett! Lovett! Lovett!" shouted he.

The captain, who had followed his comrades into the cavern, was already in the grasp of two men. From few ordinary mortals, however, could any two be selected as fearful odds against such a man as Clifford, — a man in whom a much larger share of sinews and muscle than is usually the lot even of the strong had been hardened, by perpetual exercise, into a consistency and iron firmness which linked power and activity into a union scarcely less remarkable than that immortalized in the glorious beauty of the sculptured gladiator. His right hand is upon the throat of one assailant; his left locks, as in a vice, the wrist of the other; you have scarcely time to breathe! The former is on the ground, the pistol of the latter is wrenched from his grip, Clifford is on the step; a ball — another — whizzes by him; he is by the side of the faithful Augustus!

“Open the secret door!” whispered Clifford to his friend; “I will draw up the steps alone.”

Scarcely had he spoken, before the steps were already, but slowly, ascending beneath the desperate strength of the robber. Meanwhile Ned was struggling, as he best might, with two sturdy officers, who appeared loath to use their weapons without an absolute necessity, and who endeavoured, by main strength, to capture and detain their antagonist.

“Look well to the door!” cried the voice of the principal officer, “and hang out more light!”

Two or three additional lanterns were speedily brought forward; and over the whole interior of the cavern a dim but sufficient light now rapidly circled, giving to the scene and to the combatants a picturesque and wild appearance.

The quick eye of the head-officer descried in an instant the rise of the steps, and the advantage the robbers were thereby acquiring. He and two of his men threw themselves forward, seized the ladder, if so it may be called, dragged it once more to the ground, and ascended. But Clifford, grasping with both hands the broken shaft of a cart that lay in reach, received the foremost invader with a salute that sent him prostrate and senseless back among his companions. The second shared the same fate; and the stout leader of the

enemy, who, like a true general, had kept himself in the rear, paused now in the middle of the steps, dismayed alike by the reception of his friends and the athletic form towering above, with raised weapons and menacing attitude. Perhaps that moment seemed to the judicious Mr. Nabbem more favourable to parley than to conflict. He cleared his throat, and thus addressed the foe:—

“You, sir, Captain Lovett, alias Howard, alias Jackson, alias Cavendish, alias Solomons, alias Devil,—for I knows you well, and could swear to you with half an eye, in your clothes or without,—you lay down your club there, and let me come alongside of you, and you’ll find me as gentle as a lamb; for I’ve been used to gemmen all my life, and I knows how to treat ’em when I has ’em!”

“But if I will not let you ‘come alongside of me,’ what then?”

“Why, I must send one of these here pops through your skull, that’s all!”

“Nay, Mr. Nabbem, that would be too cruel! You surely would not harm one who has such an esteem for you? Don’t you remember the manner in which I brought you off from Justice Burnflat, when you were accused, you know whether justly or—”

“You’re a liar, Captain!” cried Nabbem, furiously, fearful that something not meet for the ears of his companions should transpire. “You knows you are! Come down, or let me mount; otherwise I won’t be ’sponsible for the consequences!”

Clifford cast a look over his shoulder. A gleam of the gray daylight already glimmered through a chink in the secret door, which Tomlinson had now unbarred and was about to open.

“Listen to me, Mr. Nabbem,” said he, “and perhaps I may grant what you require! What would you do with me if you had me?”

“You speaks like a sensible man now,” answered Nabbem; “and that’s after my own heart. Why, you sees, Captain, your time is come, and you can’t shilly-shally any longer. You have had your full swing; your years are up, and you

must die like a man! But I gives you my honour as a gem-man, that if you surrenders, I'll take you to the justice folks as tenderly as if you were made of cotton."

"Give way one moment," said Clifford, "that I may plant the steps firmer for you."

Nabbem retreated to the ground; and Clifford, who had, good-naturedly enough, been unwilling unnecessarily to damage so valuable a functionary, lost not the opportunity now afforded him. Down thundered the steps, clattering heavily among the other officers, and falling like an avalanche on the shoulder of one of the arresters of Long Ned.

Meanwhile Clifford sprang after Tomlinson through the aperture, and found himself — in the presence of four officers, conducted by the shrewd MacGrawler. A blow from a bludgeon on the right cheek and temple of Augustus felled that hero. But Clifford bounded over his comrade's body, dodged from the stroke aimed at himself, caught the blow aimed by another assailant in his open hand, wrested the bludgeon from the officer, struck him to the ground with his own weapon, and darting onward through the labyrinth of the wood, commenced his escape with a step too fleet to allow the hope of a successful pursuit.



CHAPTER XXIX.

"In short, Isabella, I offer you myself!"

"Heavens!" cried Isabella, "what do I hear? You, my lord?"

Castle of Otranto.

A NOVEL is like a weatherglass, — where the man appears out at one time, the woman at another. Variable as the atmosphere, the changes of our story now re-present Lucy to the reader.

That charming young person — who, it may be remarked, is (her father excepted) the only unsophisticated and unsullied character in the pages of a story in some measure designed to show, in the depravities of character, the depravities of that

social state wherein characters are formed — was sitting alone in her apartment at the period in which we return to her. As time, and that innate and insensible fund of *healing*, which Nature has placed in the bosoms of the young in order that her great law, the passing away of the old, may not leave too lasting and keen a wound, had softened her first anguish at her father's death, the remembrance of Clifford again resumed its ancient sway in her heart. The loneliness of her life, the absence of amusement, even the sensitiveness and languor which succeed to grief, conspired to invest the image of her lover in a tenderer and more impressive guise. She recalled his words, his actions, his letters, and employed herself whole hours, whole days and nights, in endeavouring to decipher their mystery. Who that has been loved will not acknowledge the singular and mighty force with which a girl, innocent herself, clings to the belief of innocence in her lover? In breasts young and unacquainted with the world, there is so pure a credulity in the existence of unmixed good, so firm a reluctance to think that where we love there can be that which we would not esteem, or where we admire there can be that which we ought to blame, that one may almost deem it an argument in favour of our *natural* power to attain a greater eminence in virtue than the habits and arts of the existing world will allow us to reach. Perhaps it is not paradoxical to say that we could scarcely believe perfection in others, were not the germ of perfectibility in our own minds! When a man has lived some years among the actual contests of faction without imbibing the prejudice as well as the experience, how wonderingly he smiles at his worship of former idols, how different a colour does history wear to him, how cautious is he now to praise, how slow to admire, how prone to cavil! Human nature has become the human nature of art; and he estimates it not from what it may be, but from what, in the corruptions of a semi-civilization, it is! But in the same manner as the young student clings to the belief that the sage or the minstrel, who has enlightened his reason or chained his imagination, is in character as in genius elevated above the ordinary herd, free from the passions, the frivolities, the little mean-

nesses, and the darkening vices which ordinary flesh is heir to, does a woman who loves for the first time cling to the imagined excellence of him she loves. When Evelina is so shocked at the idea of an occasional fit of intoxication in her "noble, her unrivalled" lover, who does not acknowledge how natural were her feelings? Had Evelina been married six years, and the same lover, *then her husband*, been really guilty of what she suspected, who does not feel that it would have been very unnatural to have been shocked in the least at the occurrence? She would not have loved him less, nor admired him less, nor would he have been less "the noble and the unrivalled," — he would have taken his glass too much, have joked the next morning on the event, and the gentle Evelina would have made him a cup of tea; but that which would have been a matter of pleasantry in the husband would have been matter of damnation in a lover. But to return to Lucy.

If it be so hard, so repellent, to believe a lover guilty even of a trivial error, we may readily suppose that Lucy never for a moment admitted the supposition that Clifford had been really guilty of gross error or wilful crime. True that expressions in his letter were more than suspicious; but there is always a charm in the candour of self-condemnation. As it is difficult to believe the excellence of those who praise themselves, so it is difficult to fancy those criminal who condemn. What, too, is the process of a woman's reasoning? Alas! she is too credulous a physiognomist. The turn of a throat, with her, is the unerring token of nobleness of mind; and no one can be guilty of a sin who is blessed with a beautiful forehead! How fondly, how fanatically Lucy loved! She had gathered together a precious and secret hoard, — a glove, a pen, a book, a withered rose-leaf, — treasures rendered inestimable because *he* had touched them; but more than all, had she the series of his letters, — from the first formal note written to her father, meant for her, in which he answered an invitation, and requested Miss Brandon's acceptance of the music she had wished to have, to the last wild and, to her, inexplicable letter in which he had resigned her forever. On these relies her eyes fed for hours; and as she pored over them, and over

thoughts too deep not only for tears but for all utterance or conveyance, you might have almost literally watched the fading of her rich cheek and the pining away of her rounded and elastic form.

It was just in such a mood that she was buried when her uncle knocked at her door for admittance. She hurried away her treasures, and hastened to admit and greet him.

"I have come," said he, smiling, "to beg the pleasure of your company for an old friend who dines with us to-day. But, stay, Lucy, your hair is ill-arranged. Do not let me disturb so important an occupation as your toilette; dress yourself, my love, and join us."

Lucy turned, with a suppressed sigh, to the glass. The uncle lingered for a few moments, surveying her with mingled pride and doubt; he then slowly left the chamber.

Lucy soon afterwards descended to the drawing-room, and beheld with a little surprise (for she had not had sufficient curiosity to inquire the name of the guest), the slender form and comely features of Lord Mauleverer. The earl approached with the same grace which had in his earlier youth rendered him almost irresistible, but which now, from the contrast of years with manner, contained a *slight* mixture of the comic. He paid his compliments, and in paying them declared that he must leave it to his friend, Sir William, to explain *all* the danger he had dared, for the sake of satisfying himself that Miss Brandon was no less lovely than when he had last beheld her.

"Yes, indeed," said Brandon, with a scarcely perceptible sneer, "Lord Mauleverer has literally endured the moving accidents of flood and field, — for he was nearly exterminated by a highwayman, and all but drowned in a ditch!"

"Commend me to a friend for setting one off to the best advantage," said Mauleverer, gayly. "Instead of attracting your sympathy, you see, Brandon would expose me to your ridicule; judge for yourself whether I deserve it!" and Mauleverer proceeded to give, with all the animation which belonged to his character, the particulars of that adventure with which the reader is so well acquainted. He did not, we may

be sure, feel any scruple in representing himself and his prowess in the most favourable colours.

The story was scarcely ended when dinner was announced. During that meal Mauleverer exerted himself to be amiable with infinite address. Suiting his conversation, more than he had hitherto deigned to do, to the temper of Lucy, and more anxious to soften than to dazzle, he certainly never before appeared to her so attractive. We are bound to add that the point of attraction did not reach beyond the confession that he was a very agreeable *old man*.

Perhaps, if there had not been a certain half-melancholy vein in his conversation, possibly less uncongenial to his lordship from the remembrance of his lost diamonds, and the impression that Sir William Brandon's cook was considerably worse than his own, he might not have been so successful in pleasing Lucy. As for himself, all the previous impressions she had made on him returned in colours yet more vivid; even the delicate and subdued cast of beauty which had succeeded to her earlier brilliancy, was far more charming to his fastidious and courtly taste than her former glow of spirits and health. He felt himself very much in love during dinner; and after it was over, and Lucy had retired, he told Brandon, with a passionate air, that he *adored* his niece to distraction!

The wily judge affected to receive the intimation with indifference; but knowing that too long an absence is injurious to a *grande passion*, he did not keep Mauleverer very late over his wine.

The earl returned rapturously to the drawing-room, and besought Lucy, in a voice in which affectation seemed swooning with delight, to indulge him with a song. More and more enchanted by her assent, he drew the music-stool to the harpsichord, placed a chair beside her, and presently appeared lost in transport. Meanwhile Brandon, with his back to the pair, covered his face with his handkerchief, and to all appearance yielded to the voluptuousness of an after-dinner repose.

Lucy's song-book opened accidentally at a song which had been praised by Clifford; and as she sang, her voice took a

richer and more tender tone than in Mauleverer's presence it had ever before assumed.

THE COMPLAINT OF THE VIOLETS WHICH LOSE THEIR
SCENT IN MAY.

I.

In the shadow that falls from the silent hill
We slept, in our green retreats :
And the April showers were wont to fill
Our hearts with sweets.

II.

And though we lay in a lowly bower,
Yet all things loved us well,
And the waking bee left her fairest flower,
With us to dwell.

III.

But the warm May came in his pride to woo
The wealth of our honeyed store ;
And our hearts just felt his breath, and knew
Their sweets no more !

IV.

And the summer reigns on the quiet spot
Where we dwell, and its suns and showers
Bring balm to *our sisters'* hearts, but not —
Ah ! not to *ours*.

V.

We live, we bloom, but forever o'er
Is the charm of the earth and sky ;
To our life, ye heavens, that balm restore,
Or — bid us die !

As with eyes suffused with many recollections, and a voice which melted away in an indescribable and thrilling pathos, Lucy ceased her song, Mauleverer, charmed out of himself, gently took her hand, and holding the soft treasure in his own, scarcely less soft, he murmured, —

“Angel, sing on! Life would be like your own music, if I could breathe it away at your feet!”

There had been a time when Lucy would have laughed outright at this declaration; and even as it was, a suppressed and half-arch smile played in the dimples of her beautiful mouth, and bewitchingly contrasted the swimming softness of her eyes.

Drawing rather an erroneous omen from the smile, Mauleverer rapturously continued, still detaining the hand which Lucy endeavoured to extricate, —

“Yes, enchanting Miss Brandon! I, who have for so many years boasted of my invulnerable heart, am subdued at last. I have long, very long, struggled against my attachment to you. Alas! it is in vain; and you behold me now utterly at your mercy. Make me the most miserable of men or the most enviable. Enchantress, speak!”

“Really, my lord,” said Lucy, hesitating, yet rising, and freeing herself from his hand, “I feel it difficult to suppose you serious; and perhaps this is merely a gallantry to me by way of practice on others.”

“Sweet Lucy, if I may so call you,” answered Mauleverer, with an ardent gaze, “do not, I implore you, even for a moment, affect to mistake me! Do not for a moment jest at what, to me, is the bane or bliss of life! Dare I hope that my hand and heart, which I now offer you, are not deserving of your derision?”

Lucy gazed on her adorer with a look of serious inquiry; Brandon still appeared to sleep.

“If you are in earnest, my lord,” said Lucy, after a pause, “I am truly and deeply sorry. For the friend of my uncle I shall always have esteem; believe that I am truly sensible of the honour you render me, when I add my regret that I can have no *other* sentiment than esteem.”

A blank and puzzled bewilderment for a moment clouded the expressive features of Mauleverer; it passed away.

“How sweet is your rebuke!” said he. “Yes; I do not yet deserve any other sentiment than esteem. You are not to be won precipitately; a long trial, a long course of attentions, a long knowledge of my devoted and ardent love, alone will entitle me to hope for a warmer feeling in your breast. Fix

then your own time of courtship, angelic Lucy! — a week, nay, a month! Till then, I will not even press you to appoint that day which to me will be the whitest of my life!”

“My lord!” said Lucy, smiling now no longer *half* archly, “you must pardon me for believing your proposal can be nothing but a jest; but here, I beseech you, let it rest forever. Do not mention this subject to me again.”

“By heavens!” cried Mauleverer, “this is too cruel. Brandon, intercede with me for your niece.”

Sir William started, naturally enough, from his slumber, and Mauleverer continued,—

“Yes, intercede for me; you, my oldest friend, be my greatest benefactor! I sue to your niece; she affects to disbelieve. Will you convince her of my truth, my devotion, my worship?”

“Disbelieve you!” said the bland judge, with the same secret sneer that usually lurked in the corners of his mouth. “I do not wonder that she is slow to credit the honour you have done her, and for which the noblest damsels in England have sighed in vain. Lucy, will you be cruel to Lord Mauleverer? Believe me, he has often confided to me his love for you; and if the experience of some years avails, there is not a question of his honour and his truth. I leave his fate in your hands.”

Brandon turned to the door.

“Stay, dear sir,” said Lucy, “and instead of interceding for Lord Mauleverer, intercede for me.” Her look now settled into a calm and decided seriousness of expression. “I feel highly flattered by his lordship’s proposal, which, as you say, I might well doubt to be gravely meant. I wish him all happiness with a lady of higher deserts; but I speak from an unalterable determination, when I say that I can never accept the dignity with which he would invest me.”

So saying, Lucy walked quickly to the door and vanished, leaving the two friends to comment as they would upon her conduct.

“You have spoiled all with your precipitation,” said the uncle.

"Precipitation! d—n it, what would you have? I have been fifty years making up my mind to marry; and now when I have not a day to lose, you talk of precipitation!" answered the lover, throwing himself into an easy-chair.

"But you have not been fifty years making up your mind to marry my niece," said Brandon, dryly.

"To be refused, positively refused, by a country girl!" continued Mauleverer, soliloquizing aloud; "and that too at my age and with all my experience!—a country girl without rank, *ton*, accomplishments! By heavens! I don't care if all the world heard it,—for not a soul in the world will ever believe it."

Brandon sat speechless, eying the mortified face of the courtier with a malicious complacency, and there was a pause of several minutes. Sir William then, mastering the strange feeling which made him always rejoice in whatever threw ridicule on his *friend*, approached, laid his hand kindly on Mauleverer's shoulder, and talked to him of comfort and of encouragement. The reader will believe that Mauleverer was not a man whom it was impossible to encourage.



CHAPTER XXX.

BEFORE he came, everything loved me, and I had more things to love than I could reckon by the hairs of my head. Now I feel I can love but one, and that one has deserted me. . . . Well, be it so,—let her perish, let her be anything but mine!—*Melmoth*.

EARLY the next morning Sir William Brandon was closeted for a long time with his niece, previous to his departure to the duties of his office. Anxious and alarmed for the success of one of the darling projects of his ambition, he spared no art in his conversation with Lucy, that his great ingenuity of eloquence and wonderful insight into human nature could suggest, in order to gain at least a foundation for the raising of his scheme. Among other resources of his worldly tact, he

hinted at Lucy's love for Clifford; and (though darkly and subtly, as befitting the purity of the one he addressed) this abandoned and wily person did not scruple to hint also at the possibility of indulging that love *after* marriage; though he denounced, as the last of indecorums, the crime of encouraging it *before*. This hint, however, fell harmless upon the innocent ear of Lucy. She did not in the remotest degree comprehend its meaning; she only, with a glowing cheek and a pouting lip, resented the allusion to a love which she thought it insolent in any one even to suspect.

When Brandon left the apartment, his brow was clouded, and his eye absent and thoughtful: it was evident that there had been little in the conference with his niece to please or content him. Miss Brandon herself was greatly agitated; for there was in her uncle's nature that silent and impressive secret of influencing or commanding others which almost so invariably and yet so quietly attains the wishes of its owner; and Lucy, who loved and admired him sincerely, — not the less, perhaps, for a certain modicum of fear, — was greatly grieved at perceiving how rooted in him was the desire of that marriage which she felt was a moral impossibility. But if Brandon possessed the secret of sway, Lucy was scarcely less singularly endowed with the secret of resistance. It may be remembered, in describing her character, that we spoke of her as one who seemed, to the superficial, as of too yielding and soft a temper. But circumstances gave the lie to manner, and proved that she eminently possessed a quiet firmness and latent resolution, which gave to her mind a nobleness and *trustworthy* power that never would have been suspected by those who met her among the ordinary paths of life.

Brandon had not been long gone, when Lucy's maid came to inform her that a gentleman, who expressed himself very desirous of seeing her, waited below. The blood rushed from Lucy's cheek at this announcement, simple as it seemed. "What gentleman *could* be desirous of seeing her? Was it — was it Clifford?" She remained for some moments motionless, and literally unable to move; at length she summoned courage, and smiling with self-contempt at a notion which

appeared to her *after* thoughts utterly absurd, she descended to the drawing-room. The first glance she directed towards the stranger, who stood by the fireplace with folded arms, was sufficient, — it was impossible to mistake, though the face was averted, the unequalled form of her lover. She advanced eagerly with a faint cry, checked herself, and sank upon the sofa.

Clifford turned towards her, and fixed his eyes upon her countenance with an intense and melancholy gaze, but he did not utter a syllable; and Lucy, after pausing in expectation of his voice, looked up, and caught, in alarm, the strange and peculiar aspect of his features. He approached her slowly, and still silent; but his gaze seemed to grow more earnest and mournful as he advanced.

"Yes," said he at last, in a broken and indistinct voice, "I see you once more, after all my promises to quit you forever, — after my solemn farewell, after all that I have cost you; for, Lucy, you love me, you love me, and I shudder while I feel it; after all I myself have borne and resisted, I once more come wilfully into your presence! How have I burned and sickened for this moment! How have I said, 'Let me behold her once more, only once more, and Fate may then do her worst!' Lucy! dear, dear Lucy! forgive me for my weakness. It is now in bitter and stern reality the very last I can be guilty of!"

As he spoke, Clifford sank beside her. He took both her hands in his, and holding them, though without pressure, again looked passionately upon her innocent yet eloquent face. It seemed as if he were moved beyond all the ordinary feelings of reunion and of love. He did not attempt to kiss the hands he held; and though the touch thrilled through every vein and fibre of his frame, his clasp was as light as that in which the first timidity of a boy's love ventures to stamp itself!

"You are pale, Lucy," said he, mournfully, "and your cheek is much thinner than it was when I first saw you. When I first saw you! Ah! would for your sake that that had never been! Your spirits were light then, Lucy; your laugh

came from the heart, your step spurned the earth. Joy broke from your eyes, everything that breathed around you seemed full of happiness and mirth; and now, look upon me, Lucy! lift those soft eyes, and teach them to flash upon me indignation and contempt! Oh, not thus, not thus! I could leave you happy, — yes, literally blessed, — if I could fancy you less forgiving, less gentle, less angelic!”

“What have I to forgive?” said Lucy, tenderly.

“What! everything for which one human being can pardon another. Have not deceit and injury been my crimes against you? Your peace of mind, your serenity of heart, your buoyancy of temper, — have I marred *these* or not?”

“Oh, Clifford!” said Lucy, rising from herself and from all selfish thoughts, “why, why will you not trust me? You do not know me, indeed you do not, — you are ignorant even of the very nature of a woman, if you think me unworthy of your confidence! Do you believe I could betray it; or do you think that if you had done that for which all the world forsook you, *I* could forsake?”

Lucy’s voice faltered at the last words; but it sank, as a stone sinks into deep waters, to the very core of Clifford’s heart. Transported from all resolution and all forbearance, he wound his arms around her in one long and impassioned caress; and Lucy, as her breath mingled with his, and her cheek drooped upon his bosom, did indeed feel as if the past could contain no secret powerful enough even to weaken the affection with which her heart clung to his. She was the first to extricate herself from their embrace. She drew back her face from his, and smiling on him through her tears, with a brightness that the smiles of her earliest youth had never surpassed, she said, —

“Listen to me. Tell me your history or not, as you will. But believe me, a woman’s wit is often no despicable counsellor. They who accuse themselves the most bitterly are not often those whom it is most difficult to forgive; and you must pardon me if I doubt the extent of the blame you would so lavishly impute to yourself. I am now alone in the world” (here the smile withered from Lucy’s lips). “My poor father

is dead. I can injure no one by my conduct; there is no one on earth to whom I am bound by duty. I am independent, I am rich. You *profess* to love me. I am foolish and vain, and I believe you. Perhaps, also, I have the fond hope which so often makes dupes of women, — the hope that if you have erred, I may reclaim you; if you have been unfortunate, I may console you! I know, Mr. Clifford, that I am saying that for which many would despise me, and for which, perhaps, I ought to despise myself; but there are times when we speak only as if some power at our hearts constrained us, despite ourselves, — and it is thus that I have now spoken to you."

It was with an air very unwonted to herself that Lucy had concluded her address, for her usual characteristic was rather softness than dignity; but, as if to correct the meaning of her words, which might otherwise appear unmaidenly, there was a chaste, a proud, yet not the less a tender and sweet propriety and dignified frankness in her look and manner; so that it would have been utterly impossible for one who heard her not to have done justice to the nobleness of her motives, or not to have felt both touched and penetrated, as much by respect as by any warmer or more familiar feeling.

Clifford, who had risen while she was speaking, listened with a countenance that varied at every word she uttered, — now all hope, now all despondency. As she ceased, the expression hardened into a settled and compulsive resolution.

"It is well!" said he, mutteringly. "I am worthy of this, — very, very worthy! Generous, noble girl! had I been an emperor, I would have bowed down to you in worship; but to debase, to degrade you, — no! no!"

"Is there debasement in love?" murmured Lucy.

Clifford gazed upon her with a sort of enthusiastic and self-gratulatory pride; perhaps he felt to be thus loved and by such a creature *was* matter of pride, even in the lowest circumstances to which he could ever be exposed. He drew his breath hard, set his teeth, and answered, —

"You could love, then, an outcast, without birth, fortune, or character? No! you believe this now, but you could not.

Could you desert your country, your friends, and your home, —all that you are born and fitted for? Could you attend one over whom the sword hangs, through a life subjected every hour to discovery and disgrace? Could you be subjected yourself to the moodiness of an evil memory and the gloomy silence of remorse? Could you be the victim of one who has no merit but his love for you, and who, if that love destroy you, becomes utterly redeemed? Yes, Lucy, I was wrong—I will do you justice; all this, nay, more, you *could* bear, and your generous nature would disdain the sacrifice. But am *I* to be all selfish, and *you* all devoted? Are *you* to yield everything to me, and *I* to accept everything and yield none? Alas! I have but one good, one blessing to yield, and that is yourself. Lucy, I deserve you; I outdo you in generosity. All that you would desert for me is nothing—O God!—nothing to the sacrifice I make to you! And now, Lucy, I have seen you, and I must once more bid you farewell; I am on the eve of quitting this country forever. I shall enlist in a foreign service. Perhaps” (and Clifford’s dark eyes flashed with fire) “you will yet hear of me, and not blush when you hear! But” (and his voice faltered, for Lucy, hiding her face with both hands, gave way to her tears and agitation), —“but, in one respect, you have conquered. I had believed that you could never be mine,—that my past life had *forever* deprived me of that hope! I now begin, with a rapture that can bear me through all ordeals, to form a more daring vision. A soil may be effaced, —an evil name may be redeemed, —the past is not set and sealed, without the power of revoking what has been written. If I can win the right of meriting your mercy, I will throw myself on it without reserve; till then, or till death, you will see me no more!”

He dropped on his knee, left his kiss and his tears upon Lucy’s cold hand; the next moment she heard his step on the stairs, the door closed heavily and jarringly upon him, and Lucy felt one bitter pang, and, for some time at least, she felt no more!

CHAPTER XXXI.

MANY things fall between the cup and the lip!

Your man does please me

With his conceit.

Comes Chanon Hugh accoutred as you see

Disguised!

And thus am I to gull the constable?

Now have among you for a man at arms.

High-constable was more, though

He laid Dick Tator by the heels.

BEN JONSON: *Tale of a Tub*.

MEANWHILE Clifford strode rapidly through the streets which surrounded the judge's house, and turning to an obscurer *quartier* of the town, entered a gloomy lane or alley. Here he was abruptly accosted by a man wrapped in a shaggy great-coat, of somewhat a suspicious appearance.

"Aha, Captain!" said he, "you are beyond your time, but all's well!"

Attempting, with indifferent success, the easy self-possession which generally marked his address to his companions, Clifford, repeating the stranger's words, replied, —

"All's well! What! are the prisoners released?"

"No, faith!" answered the man, with a rough laugh, "not yet; but all in good time. It is a little too much to expect the justices to do our work, though, by the Lord Harry, we often do theirs!"

"What then?" asked Clifford, impatiently.

"Why, the poor fellows had been carried to the town of —, and brought before the queer cuffin¹ ere I arrived, though I set off the moment you told me, and did the journey in four hours. The examination lasted all yesterday, and

¹ Magistrate.

they were remanded till to-day, — let's see, it is not yet noon; we may be there before it's over."

"And this is what you call well!" said Clifford, angrily.

"No, Captain, don't be glimflashy! You have not heard all yet! It seems that the only thing buffed hard against them was by a stout grazier, who was cried 'Stand!' to, some fifty miles off the town; so the queer cuffin thinks of sending the poor fellows to the jail of the county where they did the business!"

"Ah! that may leave some hopes for them! We must look sharp to their journey; if they once get to prison, their only chances are the file and the bribe. Unhappily, neither of them is so lucky as myself at that trade!"

"No, indeed, there is not a stone-wall in England that the great Captain Lovett could not creep through, I'll swear!" said the admiring satellite.

"Saddle the horses and load the pistols! I will join you in ten minutes. Have my farmer's dress ready, the false hair, etc. Choose your own trim. Make haste; the Three Feathers is the house of meeting."

"And in ten minutes only, Captain?"

"Punctually!"

The stranger turned a corner and was out of sight. Clifford, muttering, "Yes, I was the cause of their apprehension; it was I who was sought; it is but fair that I should strike a blow for their escape before I attempt my own," continued his course till he came to the door of a public-house. The sign of a seaman swung aloft, portraying the jolly tar with a fine pewter pot in his hand, considerably huger than his own circumference. An immense pug sat at the door, lolling its tongue out, as if, having stuffed itself to the tongue, it was forced to turn that useful member out of its proper place. The shutters were half closed, but the sounds of coarse merriement issued jovially forth.

Clifford disconcerted the pug; and crossing the threshold, cried in a loud tone, "Janseen!"

"Here!" answered a gruff voice; and Clifford, passing on, came to a small parlour adjoining the tap. There, seated by

a round oak table, he found mine host, — a red, fierce, weather-beaten, but bloated-looking personage, like Dick Hatteraick in a dropsy.

“How now, Captain!” cried he, in a guttural accent, and interlarding his discourse with certain Dutch graces, which with our reader’s leave we will omit, as being unable to spell them; “how now! — not gone yet!”

“No! I start for the coast to-morrow; business keeps me to-day. I came to ask if Mellon may be fully depended on?”

“Ay, honest to the back-bone.”

“And you are sure that in spite of my late delays he will not have left the village?”

“Sure! What else can I be? Don’t I know Jack Mellon these twenty years! He would lie like a log in a calm for ten months together, without moving a hair’s-breadth, if he was under orders.”

“And his vessel is swift and well manned, in case of an officer’s chase?”

“The ‘Black Molly’ swift? Ask your grandmother. The ‘Black Molly’ would outstrip a shark.”

“Then good-by, Janseen; there is something to keep your pipe alight. We shall not meet within the three seas again, I think. England is as much too hot for me as Holland for you!”

“You are a capital fellow!” cried mine host, shaking Clifford by the hand; “and when the lads come to know their loss, they will know they have lost the bravest and truest gill that ever took to the toby; so good-by, and be d—d to you!”

With this valedictory benediction mine host released Clifford; and the robber hastened to his appointment at the Three Feathers.

He found all prepared. He hastily put on his disguise; and his follower led out his horse, — a noble animal of the grand Irish breed, of remarkable strength and bone, and save only that it was somewhat *sharp* in the quarters (a fault which they who look for speed as well as grace will easily forgive), of most unequalled beauty in its symmetry and proportions.

Well did the courser know, and proudly did it render obeisance to, its master; snorting impatiently and rearing from the hand of the attendant robber, the sagacious animal freed itself of the rein, and as it tossed its long mane in the breeze of the fresh air, came trotting to the place where Clifford stood.

“So ho, Robin! so ho! What, thou chafest that I have left thy fellow behind at the Red Cave! Him we may never see more. But while I have life, I will not leave *thee*, Robin!”

With these words the robber fondly stroked the shining neck of his favourite steed; and as the animal returned the caress by rubbing its head against the hands and the athletic breast of its master, Clifford felt at his heart somewhat of that old racy stir of the blood which had been once to him the chief charm of his criminal profession, and which in the late change of his feelings he had almost forgotten.

“Well, Robin, well,” he renewed, as he kissed the face of his steed, — “well, we will have some days like our old ones yet; thou shalt say, Ha! ha! to the trumpet, and bear thy master along on more glorious enterprises than he has yet thanked thee for sharing. Thou wilt now be my only familiar, my only friend, Robin; we two shall be strangers in a foreign land. But thou wilt make thyself welcome easier than thy lord, Robin; and *thou* wilt forget the old days and thine old comrades and thine old loves, when — Ha!” and Clifford turned abruptly to his attendant, who addressed him; “It is late, you say. True! Look you, it will be unwise for us both to quit London together. You know the sixth milestone; join me there, and we can proceed in company!”

Not unwilling to linger for a parting cup, the comrade assented to the prudence of the plan proposed; and after one or two additional words of caution and advice, Clifford mounted and rode from the yard of the inn. As he passed through the tall wooden gates into the street, the imperfect gleam of the wintry sun falling over himself and his steed, it was scarcely possible, even in spite of his disguise and rude garb, to conceive a more gallant and striking specimen of the lawless and daring tribe to which he belonged; the height,

strength, beauty, and exquisite *grooming* visible in the steed; the sparkling eye, the bold profile, the sinewy chest, the graceful limbs, and the careless and practised horsemanship of the rider.

Looking after his chief with a long and an admiring gaze, the robber said to the hostler of the inn, an aged and withered man, who had seen nine generations of highwaymen rise and vanish, —

"There, Joe, when did you ever look on a hero like that? The bravest heart, the frankest hand, the best judge of a horse, and the handsomest man that ever did honour to Hounslow!"

"For all that," returned the hostler, shaking his palsied head, and turning back to the tap-room, — "for all that, master, his time be up. Mark my whids, Captain Lovett will not be over the year, — no, nor mayhap the month!"

"Why, you old rascal, what makes you so wise? You will not peach, I suppose!"

"I peach! Devil a bit! But there never was the gemman of the road, great or small, knowing or stupid, as outlived his seventh year. And this will be the captain's seventh, come the 21st of next month; but he be a fine chap, and I'll go to his hanging!"

"Pish!" said the robber, peevishly, — he himself was verging towards the end of his sixth year, — "pish!"

"Mind, I tells it you, master; and somehow or other I thinks — and I has experience in these things — by the *fey*¹ of his eye and the drop of his lip, that the captain's time will be up *to-day*!"

Here the robber lost all patience, and pushing the hoary boder of evil against the wall, he turned on his heel, and sought some more agreeable companion to share his stirrup-cup.

It was in the morning of the day following that in which the above conversations occurred, that the sagacious Augustus Tomlinson and the valorous Edward Pepper, handcuffed and

¹ A word difficult to translate; but the closest interpretation of which is, perhaps, "the ill omen."

fettered, were jogging along the road in a postchaise, with Mr. Nabbem squeezed in by the side of the former, and two other gentlemen in Mr. Nabbem's confidence mounted on the box of the chaise, and interfering sadly, as Long Ned growlingly remarked, with "the beauty of the prospect."

"Ah, well!" quoth Nabbem, unavoidably thrusting his elbow into Tomlinson's side, while he drew out his snuff-box, and helped himself largely to the intoxicating dust; "you had best prepare yourself, Mr. Pepper, for a *change* of prospects. I believes as how there is little to please you in *quod* [prison]."

"Nothing makes men so facetious as misfortune to others!" said Augustus, moralizing, and turning himself, as well as he was able, in order to deliver his body from the pointed elbow of Mr. Nabbem. "When a man is down in the world, all the bystanders, very dull fellows before, suddenly become wits!"

"You reflects on I," said Mr. Nabbem. "Well, it does not sinnify a pin; for directly we does our duty, you chaps become howdaciously ungrateful!"

"Ungrateful!" said Pepper; "what a plague have we got to be grateful for? I suppose you think we ought to tell you you are the best friend we have, because you have *scrouged* us, neck and crop, into this horrible hole, like turkeys fatted for Christmas. 'Sdeath! one's hair is flatted down like a pancake; and as for one's legs, you had better cut them off at once than tuck them up in a place a foot square, — to say nothing of these blackguardly irons!"

"The only irons pardonable in your eyes, Ned," said Tomlinson, "are the curling-irons, eh?"

"Now, if this is not too much!" cried Nabbem, crossly; "you objects to go in a cart like the rest of your profession; and when I puts myself out of the way to obleedge you with a shay, you slangs I for it!"

"Peace, good Nabbem!" said Augustus, with a sage's dignity; "you must allow a little bad humour in men so unhappily situated as we are."

The soft answer turneth away wrath. Tomlinson's answer softened Nabbem; and by way of conciliation, he held his

snuff-box to the nose of his unfortunate prisoner. Shutting his eyes, Tomlinson long and earnestly sniffed up the luxury, and as soon as, with his own kerchief of spotted yellow, the officer had wiped from the proboscis some lingering grains, Tomlinson thus spoke:—

“You see us now, Mr. Nabbem, in a state of broken-down opposition; but our spirits are not broken too. In our time we have had something to do with the administration; and our comfort at present is the comfort of fallen ministers!”

“Oho! you were in the Methodist line before you took to the road?” said Nabbem.

“Not so!” answered Augustus, gravely. “We were the Methodists of politics, not of the church; namely, we lived upon our flock without a legal authority to do so, and that which the law withheld from us our wits gave. But tell me, Mr. Nabbem, are you addicted to politics?”

“Why, they says I be,” said Mr. Nabbem, with a grin; “and for my part, I thinks all who sarves the king should stand up for him, and take care of their little families!”

“You *speak* what others *think*!” answered Tomlinson, smiling also. “And I will now, since you like politics, point out to you what I dare say you have not observed before.”

“What be that?” said Nabbem.

“A wonderful likeness between the life of the gentlemen adorning his Majesty’s senate and the life of the gentlemen whom you are conducting to his Majesty’s jail.”

THE LIBELLOUS PARALLEL OF AUGUSTUS TOMLINSON.

“We enter our career, Mr. Nabbem, as your embryo ministers enter parliament, — by bribery and corruption. There is this difference, indeed, between the two cases: *we* are enticed to enter by the bribery and corruptions of *others*; *they* enter spontaneously by dint of their *own*. At first, deluded by romantic visions, we like the glory of our career better than the profit, and in our youthful generosity we profess to attack the rich solely from consideration for the poor! By and by, as we grow more hardened, we laugh at these boyish dreams, — peasant or prince fares equally at our impartial hands; we

grasp at the bucket, but we scorn not the thimbleful; we use the word 'glory' only as a trap for proselytes and apprentices; our fingers, like an office-door, are open for all that can possibly come into them; we consider the wealthy as our salary, the poor as our perquisites. What is this, but a picture of your member of parliament ripening into a minister, your patriot mellowing into your placeman? And mark me, Mr. Nabbem! is not the very language of both as similar as the deeds? What is the phrase either of us loves to employ? 'To deliver.' What? 'The Public.' And do not both invariably deliver it of the same thing,—namely, its *purse*? Do we want an excuse for sharing the gold of our neighbours, or abusing them if they resist? Is not our mutual, our pithiest plea, 'Distress'? True, your patriot calls it 'distress of the country;' but does he ever, a whit more than we do, mean any distress but his own? When we are brought low, and our coats are shabby, do we not both shake our heads and talk of 'reform'? And when, oh! when we are up in the world, do we not both kick 'reform' to the devil? How often your parliament man 'vacates his seat,' only for the purpose of resuming it with a weightier purse! How often, dear Ned, have our seats been vacated for the same end! Sometimes, indeed, he *really* finishes his career by accepting the Hundreds,—it is by 'accepting the hundreds' that ours may be finished too! [Ned drew a long sigh.] Note us now, Mr. Nabbem, in the zenith of our prosperity,—we have filled our pockets, we have become great in the mouths of our party. Our pals admire us, and our blowens adore. What do we in this short-lived summer? Save and be thrifty? Ah, no! we must give our dinners, and make light of our lush. We sport horses on the race-course, and look big at the multitude we have bubbled. Is not this your minister come into office? Does not this remind you of *his* equipage, *his* palace, *his* plate? In both cases lightly won, lavishly wasted; and the public, whose cash we have fingered, may at least have the pleasure of gaping at the figure we make with it! This, then, is our harvest of happiness; our foes, our friends, are ready to eat us with envy,—yet what is so little enviable as our

station? Have we not both our common vexations and our mutual inquietudes? Do we not both bribe [Nabbem shook his head and buttoned his waistcoat] our enemies, cajole our partisans, bully our dependants, and quarrel with our only friends,—namely, ourselves? Is not the secret question with each, ‘It is all confoundedly fine; but how long will it last?’ Now, Mr. Nabbem, note me,—reverse the portrait: we are fallen, our career is over,—the road is shut to us, and new plunderers are robbing the carriages that once we robbed. Is not this the lot of— No, no! I deceive myself! Your ministers, your jobmen, for the most part milk the popular cow while there’s a drop in the udder. Your chancellor declines on a pension; your minister attenuates on a grant; the feet of your great rogues may be gone from the treasury benches, but they have their little fingers in the treasury. Their past services are remembered by his Majesty; ours only noted by the Recorder. They save themselves, for they hang by one another; we go to the devil, for we hang by ourselves. We have our little day of the public, and all is over; but it is *never* over with them. We both hunt the same fox; but we are your fair riders, they are your knowing ones,—we take the leap, and our necks are broken; they sneak through the gates, and keep it up to the last!”

As he concluded, Tomlinson’s head dropped on his bosom, and it was easy to see that painful comparisons, mingled perhaps with secret murmurs at the injustice of fortune, were rankling in his breast. Long Ned sat in gloomy silence; and even the hard heart of the severe Mr. Nabbem was softened by the affecting parallel to which he had listened. They had proceeded without speaking for two or three miles, when Long Ned, fixing his eyes on Tomlinson, exclaimed, —

“Do you know, Tomlinson, I think it was a burning shame in Lovett to suffer us to be carried off like muttons, without attempting to rescue us by the way! It is all his fault that we are here; for it was he whom Nabbem wanted, not us.”

“Very true,” said the cunning policeman; “and if I were you, Mr. Pepper, hang me if I would not behave like a man

of spirit, and show as little consarn for him as he shows for you! Why, Lord now, I does n't want to 'tice you; but this I *does* know, the justices are very anxious to catch Lovett; and one who gives him up, and says a word or two about his c'racter, so as to make conviction sartain, may himself be sartain of a free pardon for all little sprees and so forth!"

"Ah!" said Long Ned, with a sigh, "that is all very well, Mr. Nabbem, but I'll go to the crap like a gentleman, and not peach of my comrades; and now I think of it, Lovett could scarcely have assisted us. One man alone, even Lovett, clever as he is, could not have forced us out of the clutches of you and your myrmidons, Mr. Nabbem! And when we were once at —, they took excellent care of us. But tell me now, my dear Nabbem," and Long Ned's voice wheedled itself into something like softness, — "tell me, do you think the grazier will buff it home?"

"No doubt of that," said the unmoved Nabbem. Long Ned's face fell. "And what if he does?" said he; "they can but transport us!"

"Don't desave yourself, Master Pepper!" said Nabbem: "you're too old a hand for the herring-pond. They're resolved to make gallows *apples* of all such numprels [*Nonpareils*] as you!"

Ned cast a sullen look at the officer.

"A pretty comforter you are!" said he. "I have been in a post chaise with a pleasanter fellow, I'll swear! You may call me an apple if you will, but, I take it, I am not an apple you'd like to see *peeled*."

With this pugilistic and menacing pun, the lengthy hero relapsed into meditative silence.

Our travellers were now entering a road skirted on one side by a common of some extent, and on the other by a thick hedgerow, which through its breaks gave occasional glimpses of woodland and fallow, interspersed with cross-roads and tiny brooklets.

"There goes a jolly fellow!" said Nabbem, pointing to an athletic-looking man, riding before the carriage, dressed in

a farmer's garb, and mounted on a large and powerful horse of the Irish breed. "I dare say he is well acquainted with *your* grazier, Mr. Tomlinson; he looks mortal like one of the same kidney; and here comes another chap" (as the stranger was joined by a short, stout, ruddy man in a carter's frock, riding on a horse less showy than his comrade's, but of the lengthy, reedy, lank, yet muscular race, which a knowing jockey would like to bet on). "Now that's what I calls a comely lad!" continued Nabbem, pointing to the latter horse-man; "none of your thin-faced, dark, strapping fellows like that Captain Lovett, as the blowens raves about, but a nice, tight little body, with a face like a carrot! That's a beauty for my money! Honesty's stamped on his face, Mr. Tomlinson! I dare says" (and the officer grinned, for he had been a lad of the cross in his own day),—"I dare says, poor innocent booby, he knows none of the ways of Lunnun town; and if he has not as merry a life as some folks, mayhap he may have a longer. But a merry one forever for such lads as us, Mr. Pepper! I say, has you heard as how Bill Fang went to Scratchland [Scotland] and was stretched for smashing queer screens [that is, hung for uttering forged notes]? He died 'nation game; for when his father, who was a gray-headed parson, came to see him after the sentence, he says to the governor, say he, 'Give us a tip, old 'un, to pay the expenses, and die dacently.' The parson forks him out ten shiners, preaching all the while like winkey. Bob drops one of the guineas between his fingers, and says, 'Holla, dad, you have only tipped us nine of the yellow boys! Just now you said as how it was ten!' On this the parish-bull, who was as poor as if he had been a mouse of the church instead of the curate, lugs out another; and Bob, turning round to the jailer, cries, 'Flung the governor out of a guinea, by God!'¹ Now, that's what I calls keeping it up to the last!"

Mr. Nabbem had scarcely finished this anecdote, when the farmer-like stranger, who had kept up by the side of the chaise, suddenly rode to the window, and touching his hat, said in a Norfolk accent, —

¹ Fact.

"Were the gentlemen we met on the road belonging to your party? They were asking after a chaise and pair."

"No!" said Nabbem, "there be no gentlemen as belongs to our party!" So saying, he tipped a knowing wink at the farmer, and glanced over his shoulder at the prisoners.

"What! you are going all alone?" said the farmer.

"Ay, to be sure," answered Nabbem; "not much danger, I think, in the daytime, with the sun out as big as a sixpence, which is as big as ever I see'd him in this country!"

At that moment the shorter stranger, whose appearance had attracted the praise of Mr. Nabbem (that personage was himself very short and ruddy), and who had hitherto been riding close to the post-horses, and talking to the officers on the box, suddenly threw himself from his steed, and in the same instant that he arrested the horses of the chaise, struck the postilion to the ground with a short heavy bludgeon which he drew from his frock. A whistle was heard and answered, as if by a signal: three fellows, armed with bludgeons, leaped from the hedge; and in the interim the pretended farmer, dismounting, flung open the door of the chaise, and seizing Mr. Nabbem by the collar, swung him to the ground with a celerity that became the circular rotundity of the policeman's figure rather than the deliberate gravity of his dignified office.

Rapid and instantaneous as had been this work, it was not without a check. Although the policemen had not dreamed of a rescue in the very face of the day and on the high-road, their profession was not that which suffered them easily to be surprised. The two guardians of the dicky leaped nimbly to the ground; but before they had time to use their fire-arms, two of the new aggressors, who had appeared from the hedge, closed upon them, and bore them to the ground. While this scuffle took place, the farmer had disarmed the prostrate Nabbem, and giving him in charge to the remaining confederate, extricated Tomlinson and his comrade from the chaise.

"Hist!" said he in a whisper, "beware my name; my disguise hides me at present. Lean on me, — only through the hedge; a cart waits there, and you are safe!"

With these broken words he assisted the robbers as well as he could, in spite of their manacles, through the same part of the hedge from which the three allies had sprung. They were already through the barrier, — only the long legs of Ned Pepper lingered behind, — when at the far end of the road, which was perfectly straight, a gentleman's carriage became visible. A strong hand from the interior of the hedge, seizing Pepper, dragged him through; and Clifford, — for the reader need not be told who was the farmer, — perceiving the approaching reinforcement, shouted at once for flight. The robber who had guarded Nabbem, and who indeed was no other than Old Bags, slow as he habitually was, lost not an instant in providing for himself; before you could say "Laudamus," he was on the other side of the hedge. The two men engaged with the police-officers were not capable of an equal celerity; but Clifford, throwing himself into the contest and engaging the policemen, gave the robbers the opportunity of escape. They scrambled through the fence; the officers, tough fellows and keen, clinging lustily to them, till one was felled by Clifford, and the other, catching against a stump, was forced to relinquish his hold; he then sprang back into the road and prepared for Clifford, who now, however, occupied himself rather in fugitive than warlike measures. Meanwhile, the moment the other rescuers had passed the Rubicon of the hedge, their flight, and that of the gentlemen who had passed before them, commenced. On this mystic side of the hedge was a cross-road, striking at once through an intricate and wooded part of the country, which allowed speedy and ample opportunities of dispersion. Here a light cart, drawn by two swift horses in a tandem fashion, awaited the fugitives. Long Ned and Augustus were stowed down at the bottom of this vehicle; three fellows filed away at their irons, and a fourth, who had hitherto remained inglorious with the cart, gave the lash — and he gave it handsomely — to the coursers. Away rattled the equipage; and thus was achieved a flight still memorable in the annals of the elect, and long quoted as one of the boldest and most daring exploits that illicit enterprise ever accomplished.

Clifford and his equestrian comrade only remained in the field, or rather the road. The former sprang at once on his horse; the latter was not long in following the example. But the policeman, who, it has been said, baffled in detaining the fugitives of the hedge, had leaped back into the road, was not idle in the meanwhile. When he saw Clifford about to mount, instead of attempting to seize the enemy, he recurred to his pistol, which in the late struggle hand to hand he had been unable to use, and taking sure aim at Clifford, whom he judged at once to be the leader of the rescue, he lodged a ball in the right side of the robber at the very moment he had set spurs in his horse and turned to fly. Clifford's head drooped to the saddle-bow. Fiercely the horse sprang on. The robber endeavoured, despite his reeling senses, to retain his seat; once he raised his head, once he nerved his slackened and listless limbs, and then, with a faint groan, he fell to the earth. The horse bounded but one step more, and, true to the tutorship it had received, stopped abruptly. Clifford raised himself with great difficulty on one arm; with the other hand he drew forth a pistol. He pointed it deliberately towards the officer that wounded him. The man stood motionless, cowering and spell-bound, beneath the dilating eye of the robber. It was but for a moment that the man had cause for dread; for muttering between his ground teeth, "Why waste it on *an enemy*?" Clifford turned the muzzle towards the head of the unconscious steed, which seemed sorrowfully and wistfully to incline towards him. "Thou," he said, "whom I have fed and loved, shalt never know hardship from another!" and with a merciful cruelty he dragged himself one pace nearer to his beloved steed, uttered a well-known word, which brought the docile creature to his side, and placing the muzzle of the pistol close to his ear, he fired, and fell back senseless at the exertion. The animal staggered, and dropped down dead.

Meanwhile Clifford's comrade, profiting by the surprise and sudden panic of the officer, was already out of reach, and darting across the common, he and his ragged courser speedily vanished.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LOSE I not

With him what fortune could in life allot ?

Lose I not hope, life's cordial ?

In fact, the lessons he from prudence took
Were written in his mind as in a book ;
There what to do he read, and what to shun,
And all commanded was with promptness done.
He seemed without a passion to proceed,

Yet some believed those passions only slept !

CRABBE.

Relics of love, and life's enchanted spring !

A. WATTS : *On burning a Packet of Letters.*

Many and sad and deep

Were the thoughts folded in thy silent breast !

Thou, too, could'st watch and weep !

MRS. HEMANS.

WHILE Sir William Brandon was pursuing his ambitious schemes, and, notwithstanding Lucy's firm and steady refusal of Lord Mauleverer, was still determined on that ill-assorted marriage; while Mauleverer himself day after day attended at the judge's house, and, though he spoke not of love, looked it with all his might, — it became obvious to every one but the lover and the guardian, that Lucy herself was rapidly declining in appearance and health. Ever since the day she had last seen Clifford, her spirits, before greatly shattered, had refused to regain even a likeness to their naturally cheerful and happy tone. She became silent and abstracted; even her gentleness of temper altered at times into a moody and fretful humour. Neither to books nor music, nor any art by which time is beguiled, she recurred for a momentary alleviation of the bitter feelings at her heart, or for a transient for-

getfulness of their sting. The whole world of her mind had been shaken. Her pride was wounded, her love galled; her faith in Clifford gave way at length to gloomy and dark suspicion. Nothing, she now felt, but a name as well as fortunes utterly abandoned, could have justified him for the stubbornness of heart in which he had fled and deserted her. Her own self-acquittal no longer consoled her in affliction. She condemned herself for her weakness, from the birth of her ill-starred affection to the crisis it had now acquired. "Why did I not wrestle with it at first?" she said bitterly. "Why did I allow myself so easily to love one unknown to me, and equivocal in station, despite the cautions of my uncle and the whispers of the world?" Alas! Lucy did not remember that at the time she was guilty of this weakness, she had not learned to reason as she since reasoned. Her faculties were but imperfectly awakened; her experience of the world was utter ignorance. She scarcely knew that she loved, and she knew not at all that the delicious and excited sentiment which filled her being could ever become as productive of evil and peril as it had done now; and even *had* her reason been more developed, and her resolutions more strong, does the exertion of reason and resolution always avail against the master passion? Love, it is true, is *not* unconquerable; but how few have ever, mind and soul, coveted the conquest! Disappointment makes a vow, but the heart records it not. Or in the noble image of one who has so tenderly and so truly portrayed the feelings of her own sex, —

" We make

A ladder of our thoughts where angels step,
But sleep ourselves at the foot!"¹

Before Clifford had last seen her, we have observed that Lucy had (and it was a consolation) clung to the belief that, despite of appearances and his own confession, his past life had not been such as to place him without the pale of her just affections; and there were frequent moments when, remembering that the death of her father had removed the *only* being who could assert an unanswerable claim to the

¹ The History of the Lyre, by L. E. L.

dictation of her actions, she thought that Clifford, hearing her hand was utterly at her own disposal, might again appear, and again urge a suit which he felt so few circumstances could induce her to deny. All this half-acknowledged yet earnest train of reasoning and hope vanished from the moment he had quitted her uncle's house. His words bore no misinterpretation. He had not yielded even to her own condescension, and her cheek burned as she recalled it. Yet he loved her. She saw, she knew it in his every word and look! Bitter, then, and dark must be that remorse which could have conquered every argument but that which urged him to leave her, when he might have claimed her forever. True, that when his letter formally bade her farewell, the same self-accusing language was recurred to, the same dark hints and allusions to infamy or guilt; yet never till now had she interpreted them rigidly, and never till now had she dreamed how far their meaning could extend. Still, what crimes could he have committed? The true ones never occurred to Lucy. She shuddered to ask herself, and hushed her doubts in a gloomy and torpid silence. But through all her accusations against herself, and through all her awakened suspicions against Clifford, she could not but acknowledge that something noble and not unworthy of her mingled in his conduct, and occasioned his resistance to her and to himself; and this belief, perhaps, irritated even while it touched her, and kept her feelings in a perpetual struggle and conflict which her delicate frame and soft mind were little able to endure. When the nerves once break, how breaks the character with them! How many ascetics, withered and soured, do we meet in the world, who but for one shock to the heart and form might have erred on the side of meekness! Whether it come from woe or disease, the stroke which mars a single fibre plays strange havoc with the mind. Slaves we are to our muscles, and puppets to the spring of the capricious blood; and the great soul, with all its capacities, its solemn attributes, and sounding claims, is, while on earth, but a jest to this mountebank, — the body, — from the dream which toys with it for an hour, to the lunacy which shivers it into a driveller, laughing as it

plays with its own fragments, and reeling benighted and blinded to the grave!

We have before said that Lucy was fond both of her uncle and his society; and still, whenever the subject of Lord Maul-everer and his suit was left untouched, there was that in the conversation of Sir William Brandon which aroused an interest in her mind, engrossed and self-consuming as it had become. Sorrow, indeed, and sorrow's companion, reflection, made her more and more capable of comprehending a very subtle and intricate character. There is no secret for discovering the human heart like affliction, especially the affliction which springs from passion. Does a writer startle you with his insight into your nature, be sure that he has mourned; such lore is the alchemy of tears. Hence the insensible and almost universal confusion of idea which confounds melancholy with depth, and finds but hollow inanity in the symbol of a laugh. Pitiab! error! Reflection first leads us to gloom, but its next stage is to brightness. The Laughing Philosopher had reached the goal of Wisdom; Heraclitus whimpered at the starting-post. But enough for Lucy to gain even the vestibule of philosophy.

Notwithstanding the soreness we naturally experience towards all who pertinaciously arouse an unpleasant subject, and in spite therefore of Brandon's furtherance of Maul-everer's courtship, Lucy felt herself inclined strangely, and with something of a daughter's affection, towards this enigmatical being; in spite, too, of all the cold and measured vice of his character, — the hard and wintry grayness of heart with which he regarded the welfare of others, or the substances of Truth, Honour, and Virtue, — the callousness of his fossilized affections, which no human being softened but for a moment, and no warm and healthful impulse struck, save into an evanescent and idle flash; — in spite of this consummate obduracy and worldliness of temperament, it is not paradoxical to say that there was something in the man which Lucy found at times analogous to her own vivid and generous self. This was, however, only noticeable when she led him to talk over earlier days, and when by degrees the sarcastic lawyer

forgot the present, and grew eloquent, not over the actions, but the feelings of the past. He would speak to her for hours of his youthful dreams, his occupations, or his projects, as a boy. Above all, he loved to converse with her upon Warlock, its remains of ancient magnificence, the green banks of the placid river that enriched its domains, and the summer pomp of wood and heath-land, amidst which his noonday visions had been nursed.

When he spoke of these scenes and days, his countenance softened, and something in its expression, recalling to Lucy the image of one still dearer, made her yearn to him the more. An ice seemed broken from his mind, and streams of released and gentle feelings, mingled with kindly and generous sentiment, flowed forth. Suddenly a thought, a word, brought him back to the present, — his features withered abruptly into their cold placidity or latent sneer; the seal closed suddenly on the broken spell, and, like the victim of a fairy-tale, condemned at a stated hour to assume another shape, the very being you had listened to seemed vanished, and replaced by one whom you startled to behold. But there was one epoch of his life on which he was always silent, and that was his first onset into the actual world, — the period of his early struggle into wealth and fame. All *that* space of time seemed as a dark gulf, over which he had passed, and become changed at once, — as a traveller landing in a strange climate may adopt, the moment he touches its shore, its costume and its language.

All *men* — the most modest — have a common failing; but it is one which often assumes the domino and mask, — *pride*! Brandon was, however, proud to a degree very rare in men who have risen and flourished in the world. Out of the wrecks of all other feelings this imperial survivor made one great palace for its residence, and called the fabric "Disdain." Scorn was the real essence of Brandon's nature; even in the blandest disguises, the smoothness of his voice, the insinuation of his smile, the popular and supple graces of his manners, an oily derision floated, rarely discernible, it is true, but proportioning its strength and quantum to the calm it produced.

In the interim, while his character thus displayed and contradicted itself in private life, his fame was rapidly rising in public estimation. Unlike many of his brethren, the brilliant lawyer had exceeded expectation, and shone even yet more conspicuously in the less adventitiously aided duties of the judge. Envy itself—and Brandon's political virulence had, despite his personal affability, made him many foes—was driven into acknowledging the profundity of his legal knowledge, and in admiring the manner in which the peculiar functions of his novel dignity were discharged. No juvenile lawyer browbeat, no hackneyed casuist puzzled, him; even his attention never wandered from the dullest case subjected to his tribunal. A painter, desirous of stamping on his canvas the portrait of an upright judge, could scarcely have found a finer realization for his beau-ideal than the austere, collected, keen, yet majestic countenance of Sir William Brandon, such as it seemed in the trappings of office and from the seat of justice.

The newspapers were not slow in recording the singular capture of the notorious Lovett. The boldness with which he had planned and executed the rescue of his comrades, joined to the suspense in which his wound for some time kept the public, as to his escape from one death by the postern gate of another, caused a very considerable ferment and excitation in the popular mind; and, to feed the impulse, the journalists were little slothful in retailing every anecdote, true or false, which they could collect touching the past adventures of the daring highwayman. Many a good story then came to light, which partook as much of the comic as the tragic,—for not a single one of the robber's adventures was noted for cruelty or bloodshed; many of them betokened rather an hilarious and jovial spirit of mirthful enterprise. It seemed as if he had thought the highway a capital arena for jokes, and only robbed for the sake of venting a redundant affection for jesting. Persons felt it rather a sin to be severe with a man of so merry a disposition; and it was especially observable that not one of the ladies who had been despoiled by the robber could be prevailed on to prosecute; on the contrary,

they always talked of the event as one of the most agreeable remembrances in their lives, and seemed to bear a provoking gratitude to the comely offender, rather than resentment. All the gentlemen were not, however, of so placable a temper; and two sturdy farmers, with a grazier to boot, were ready to swear, "through thick and thin," to the identity of the prisoner with a horseman who had civilly borne each of them company for an hour in their several homeward rides from certain fairs, and had carried the pleasure of his society, they very gravely asserted, considerably beyond a joke; so that the state of the prisoner's affairs took a very sombre aspect, and the counsel — an old hand — intrusted with his cause declared confidentially that there was not a chance. But a yet more weighty accusation, because it came from a much nobler quarter, awaited Clifford. In the robbers' cavern were found several articles answering exactly to the description of those valuables feloniously abstracted from the person of Lord Mauleverer. That nobleman attended to inspect the articles, and to view the prisoner. The former he found himself able to swear to, with a very tranquillized conscience; the latter he beheld feverish, attenuated, and in a moment of delirium, on the sick-bed to which his wound had brought him. He was at no loss, however, to recognize in the imprisoned felon the gay and conquering Clifford, whom he had once even honoured with his envy. Although his former dim and vague suspicions of Clifford were thus confirmed, the good-natured peer felt some slight compunction at appearing as his prosecutor. This compunction, however, vanished the moment he left the sick man's apartment; and after a little patriotic conversation with the magistrates about the necessity of public duty, — a theme which brought virtuous tears into the eyes of those respectable functionaries, — he re-entered his carriage, returned to town, and after a lively dinner *tête-à-tête* with an old *chère amie*, who, of all her charms, had preserved only the attraction of conversation and the capacity of relishing a *salmi*, Mauleverer, the very evening of his return, betook himself to the house of Sir William Brandon.

When he entered the hall, Barlow, the judge's favourite

servant, met him, with rather a confused and mysterious air, and arresting him as he was sauntering into Brandon's library, informed him that Sir William was particularly engaged, but would join his lordship in the drawing-room. While Barlow was yet speaking, and Mauleverer was bending his right ear (with which he heard the best) towards him, the library door opened, and a man in a very coarse and ruffianly garb awkwardly bowed himself out.

"So this is the particular engagement," thought Mauleverer, — "a strange Sir Pandarus; but those *old* fellows have droll tastes."

"I may go in now, my good fellow, I suppose?" said his lordship to Barlow; and without waiting an answer, he entered the library. He found Brandon alone, and bending earnestly over some letters which strewed his table. Mauleverer carelessly approached, and threw himself into an opposite chair. Sir William lifted his head, as he heard the movement; and Mauleverer, reckless as was that personage, was chilled and almost awed by the expression of his friend's countenance. Brandon's face was one which, however pliant, nearly always wore one pervading character, — *calmness*; whether in the smoothness of social courtesy, or the austerity of his official station, or the bitter sarcasm which escaped him at no unfrequent intervals, still a certain hard and inflexible dryness stamped both his features and his air. But at this time a variety of feelings not ordinarily eloquent in the outward man struggled in his dark face, expressive of all the energy and passion of his powerful and masculine nature; there seemed to speak from his features and eyes something of shame and anger and triumph and regret and scorn. All these various emotions, which it appears almost a paradox to assert met in the same expression, nevertheless were so individually and almost fearfully stamped as to convey at once their signification to the mind of Mauleverer. He glanced towards the letters, in which the writing seemed faint and discoloured by time or damp; and then once more regarding the face of Brandon, said in rather an anxious and subdued tone, —

"Heavens, Brandon! are you ill; or has anything happened? You alarm me!"

"Do you recognize these locks?" said Brandon, in a hollow voice; and from under the letters he drew some ringlets of an auburn hue, and pushed them with an averted face towards Mauleverer.

The earl took them up, regarded them for a few moments, changed colour, but shook his head with a negative gesture, as he laid them once more on the table.

"This handwriting, then?" renewed the judge, in a yet more impressive and painful voice; and he pointed to the letters.

Mauleverer raised one of them, and held it between his face and the lamp, so that whatever his features might have betrayed was hidden from his companion. At length he dropped the letter with an affected *nonchalance*, and said, —

"Ah, I know the writing even at this distance of time; this letter is directed to you!"

"It is; so are all these," said Brandon, with the same voice of preternatural and strained composure. "They have come back to me after an absence of nearly twenty-five years; they are the letters she wrote to me in the days of our courtship" (here Brandon laughed scornfully), — "she carried them away with her, you know when; and (a pretty clod of consistency is woman!) she kept them, it seems, to her dying day."

The subject in discussion, whatever it might be, appeared a sore one to Mauleverer; he turned uneasily on his chair, and said at length, —

"Well, poor creature! these are painful remembrances, since it turned out so unhappily; but it was not our fault, dear Brandon. We were men of the world; we knew the value of — of women, and treated them accordingly!"

"Right! right! right!" cried Brandon, vehemently, laughing in a wild and loud disdain, the intense force of which it would be in vain to attempt expressing. "Right! and, faith, my lord, I repine not, nor repent."

"So, so, that's well!" said Mauleverer, still not at his ease, and hastening to change the conversation. "But, my

dear Brandon, I have strange news for you! You remember that fellow Clifford, who had the insolence to address himself to your adorable niece? I told you I suspected that long friend of his of having made my acquaintance somewhat unpleasantly, and I therefore doubted of Clifford himself. Well, my dear friend, this Clifford is — whom do you think? — no other than Mr. Lovett of Newgate celebrity!”

“You do not say so!” rejoined Brandon, apathetically, as he slowly gathered his papers together and deposited them in a drawer.

“Indeed it is true; and what is more, Brandon, this fellow is one of the very identical highwaymen who robbed me on my road from Bath. No doubt he did me the same kind office on my road to Mauleverer Park.”

“Possibly,” said Brandon, who appeared absorbed in a reverie.

“Ay!” answered Mauleverer, piqued at this indifference. “But do you not see the consequences to your niece?”

“My niece!” repeated Brandon, rousing himself.

“Certainly. I grieve to say it, my dear friend, — but she was young, very young, when at Bath. She suffered this fellow to address her too openly. Nay, — for I will be frank, — she was suspected of being in love with him!”

“She *was* in love with him,” said Brandon, dryly, and fixing the malignant coldness of his eye upon the suitor. “And, for aught I know,” added he, “she is so at this moment.”

“You are cruel!” said Mauleverer, disconcerted. “I trust not, for the sake of my continued addresses.”

“My dear lord,” said Brandon, urbanely taking the courtier’s hand, while the *anguis in herba* of his sneer played around his compressed lips, — “my dear lord, we are old friends, and need not deceive each other. You wish to marry my niece because she is an heiress of great fortune, and you suppose that my wealth will in all probability swell her own. Moreover, she is more beautiful than any other young lady of your acquaintance, and, polished by your example, may do honour to your taste as well as your prudence. Under these

circumstances, you will, I am quite sure, look with lenity on her girlish errors, and not love her the less because her foolish fancy persuades her that she is in love with another."

"Ahem!" said Mauleverer, "you view the matter with more sense than sentiment; but look you, Brandon, we must try, for both our sakes, if possible, to keep the identity of Lovett with Clifford from being known. I do not see why it should be. No doubt he was on his guard while playing the gallant, and committed no atrocity at Bath. The name of Clifford is hitherto perfectly unsullied. No fraud, no violence are attached to the appellation; and if the rogue will but keep his own counsel, we may hang him out of the way without the secret transpiring."

"But if I remember right," said Brandon, "the newspapers say that this Lovett will be tried some seventy or eighty miles only from Bath, and that gives a chance of recognition."

"Ay, but he will be devilishly altered, I imagine; for his wound has already been but a bad beautifier to his face. Moreover, if the dog has any delicacy, he will naturally dislike to be known as the gallant of that gay city where he shone so successfully, and will disguise himself as well as he is able. I hear wonders of his powers of self-transformation."

"But he may commit himself on the point between this and his trial," said Brandon.

"I think of ascertaining how far that is likely, by sending my valet down to him (you know one treats these gentlemen highwaymen with a certain consideration, and hangs them with all due respect to their feelings), to hint that it will be doubtless very unpleasant to him, under his 'present unfortunate circumstances' (is not that the phrase?), to be known as the gentleman who enjoyed so deserved a popularity at Bath, and that, though 'the laws of my country compel me' to prosecute him, yet, should he desire it, he may be certain that I will preserve his secret. Come, Brandon, what say you to that manœuvre? It will answer my purpose, and make the gentleman—for doubtless he is all sensibility—shed tears at my generous forbearance!"

"It is no bad idea," said Brandon. "I commend you for it. At all events, it is necessary that my niece should not know the situation of her lover. She is a girl of a singular turn of mind, and fortune has made her independent. Who knows but that she might commit some folly or another, write petitions to the king, and beg me to present them, or go — for she has a world of romance in her — to prison, to console him; or, at all events, she would beg my kind offices on his behalf, — a request peculiarly awkward, as in all probability I shall have the honour of trying him."

"Ay, by the by, so you will. And I fancy the poor rogue's audacity will not cause you to be less severe than you usually are. They say you promise to make more human pendulums than any of your brethren."

"They do say that, do they?" said Brandon. "Well, I own I have a bile against my species; I loathe their folly and their half vices. 'Ridet et odit'¹ is my motto; and I allow that it is not the philosophy that makes men merciful!"

"Well, Juvenal's wisdom be yours, mine be Horace's!" rejoined Mauleverer, as he picked his teeth; "but I am glad you see the absolute necessity of keeping this secret from Lucy's suspicion. She never reads the papers, I suppose? Girls never do!"

"No! and I will take care not to have them thrown in her way; and as, in consequence of my poor brother's recent death, she sees nobody but us, there is little chance, should Lovett's right to the name of Clifford be discovered, that it should reach her ears."

"But those confounded servants?"

"True enough! But consider that before *they* know it, the newspapers will; so that, should it be needful, we shall have our own time to caution them. I need only say to Lucy's woman, 'A poor gentleman, a friend of the late squire, whom your mistress used to dance with, and you must have seen, — Captain Clifford, — is to be tried for his life. It will shock her, poor thing! in her present state of health, to tell her of so sad an event to her father's friend; therefore be silent, as

¹ "He laughs and hates."

you value your place and ten guineas,' — and I may be tolerably sure of caution!"

"You ought to be chairman to the Ways and Means Committee!" cried Mauleverer. "My mind is now easy; and when once poor Clifford is gone, — *fallen from a high estate*, — we may break the matter gently to her; and as I intend thereon to be very respectful, very delicate, etc., she cannot but be sensible of my kindness and real affection!"

"And if a live dog be better than a dead lion," added Brandon, "surely a lord in existence will be better than a highwayman hanged!"

"According to ordinary logic," rejoined Mauleverer, "that syllogism is clear enough; and though I believe a girl may cling now and then to the memory of a departed lover, I do not think she will when the memory is allied with shame. Love is nothing more than vanity pleased; wound the vanity, and you destroy the love! Lucy will be forced, after having made so bad a choice of a lover, to make a good one in a husband, in order to recover her self-esteem!"

"And therefore *you* are certain of her!" said Brandon, ironically.

"Thanks to my star, — my garter, — my ancestor, the first baron, and myself, the first earl, — I hope I am," said Mauleverer; and the conversation turned. Mauleverer did not stay much longer with the judge; and Brandon, left alone, recurred once more to the perusal of his letters.

We scarcely know what sensations it would have occasioned in one who had known Brandon only in his later years, could he have read those letters referring to so much earlier a date. There was in the keen and arid character of the man so little that recalled any idea of courtship or youthful gallantry that a correspondence of that nature would have appeared almost as unnatural as the loves of plants, or the amatory softening of a mineral. The correspondence now before Brandon was descriptive of various feelings, but all appertaining to the same class; most of them were apparent answers to letters from him. One while they replied tenderly to expressions of tenderness, but intimated a doubt whether the writer

would be able to constitute his future happiness, and atone for certain sacrifices of birth and fortune and ambitious prospects, to which she alluded: at other times, a vein of latent coquetry seemed to pervade the style, — an indescribable air of coolness and reserve contrasted former passages in the correspondence, and was calculated to convey to the reader an impression that the feelings of the lover were not altogether adequately returned. Frequently the writer, as if Brandon had expressed himself sensible of this conviction, reproached him for unjust jealousy and unworthy suspicion. And the tone of the reproach varied in each letter; sometimes it was gay and satirizing; at others soft and expostulatory; at others gravely reasoning, and often haughtily indignant. Still, throughout the whole correspondence, on the part of the mistress, there was a sufficient stamp of individuality to give a shrewd examiner some probable guess at the writer's character. He would have judged her, perhaps, capable of strong and ardent feeling, but ordinarily of a light and capricious turn, and seemingly prone to imagine and to resent offence. With these letters were mingled others in Brandon's writing, — of how different, of how impassioned a description! All that a deep, proud, meditative, exacting character could dream of love given, or require of love returned, was poured burningly over the pages; yet they were full of reproach, of jealousy, of a nice and torturing observation, as calculated to wound as the ardour might be fitted to charm; and often the bitter tendency to disdain that distinguished his temperament broke through the fondest enthusiasm of courtship or the softest outpourings of love.

"You saw me not yesterday," he wrote in one letter, "but I saw you; all day I was by you: you gave not a look which passed me unnoticed; you made not a movement which I did not chronicle in my memory. Julia, do you tremble when I tell you this? Yes, if you have a heart, *I know* these words would stab it to the core! You may affect to answer me indignantly! Wise dissembler! it is very skilful, very, to assume anger when you have no reply. I repeat during the whole of that party of pleasure (pleasure! well, your tastes, it must be acknowledged, are exquisite!) which you enjoyed yesterday, and which

you so faintly asked me to share, my eye was on you. You did not know that I was in the wood when you took the arm of the incomparable Digby, with so pretty a semblance of alarm at the moment the snake which my foot disturbed glided across your path. You did not know I was within hearing of the tent where you made so agreeable a repast, and from which your laughter sent peals so many and so numerous. Laughter! O Julia, *can* you tell me that you love, and yet be happy, even to mirth, when I am away! Love! O God, how different a sensation is mine! Mine makes my whole principle of life! Yours! I tell you that I think at moments I would rather have your hate than the lukewarm sentiment you bear to me, and honour by the name of 'affection.' Pretty phrase! I have *no affection* for you! Give me not that sickly word; but try with me, Julia, to invent some expression that has never filtered a paltry meaning through the lips of another! Affection! why, that is a sister's word, a girl's word to her pet squirrel! Never was it made for that ruby and most ripe mouth! Shall I come to your house this evening? Your mother has asked me, and you — *you* heard her, and said nothing. Oh! but that was maiden reserve, was it? and maiden reserve caused you to take up a book the moment I left you, as if my company made but an ordinary amusement instantly to be replaced by another! When *I* have seen you, society, books, food, all are hateful to me; but *you*, sweet Julia, *you* can read, can you? Why, when *I* left you, I lingered by the parlour window for hours, till dusk, and you never once lifted your eyes, nor saw me pass and repass. At least I thought you would have watched my steps when I left the house; but I err, charming moralist! According to you, that vigilance would have been meanness."

In another part of the correspondence a more grave if not a deeper gush of feeling struggled for expression.

"You say, Julia, that were you to marry one who thinks so much of what he surrenders for you, and who requires from yourself so vast a return of love, you should tremble for the future happiness of both of us. Julia, the triteness of that fear proves that you love not at all. I do not tremble for our future happiness; on the contrary, the intensity of my passion for you makes me *know* that we never can be happy, never beyond the first rapture of our union. Happiness is a quiet and tranquil feeling. No feeling that I can possibly bear to you will ever receive those epithets, — I know that I shall be wretched and accursed when I am united to you. Start not! I will presently tell you why. But I do not dream of happiness, neither (could you fathom one drop of

the dark and limitless ocean of my emotions) would you name to me that word. It is not the mercantile and callous calculation of chances for 'future felicity' (what homily supplied you with so choice a term?) that enters into the heart that cherishes an all-pervading love. Passion looks only to one object, to nothing beyond; I thirst, I consume, not for happiness, but *you*. Were your possession inevitably to lead me to a gulf of anguish and shame, think you I should covet it one jot the less? If you carry one thought, one hope, one dim fancy, beyond the event that makes you mine, you may be more worthy of the esteem of others, but you are utterly undeserving of *my love*.

"I will tell you now why I know we cannot be happy. In the first place, when you say that I am proud of birth, that I am morbidly ambitious, that I am anxious to shine in the great world, and that after the first intoxication of love has passed away I shall feel bitterness against one who has so humbled my pride and darkened my prospects, I am not sure that you wholly err. But I *am* sure that the instant remedy is in your power. Have you patience, Julia, to listen to a kind of history of myself, or rather of my feelings? If so, perhaps it may be the best method of explaining all that I would convey. You will see, then, that my family pride and my worldly ambition are not founded altogether on those basements which move my laughter in another; if my feelings thereon are really, however, as you would insinuate, equal matter for derision, behold, my Julia, I can laugh equally at them! So pleasant a thing to me is scorn, that I would rather despise myself than have no one to despise! But to my narrative! You must know that there are but two of us, sons of a country squire, of old family, which once possessed large possessions and something of historical renown. We lived in an old country-place; my father was a convivial dog, a fox-hunter, a drunkard, yet in his way a fine gentleman, — and a very disreputable member of society. The first feelings towards him that I can remember were those of shame. Not much matter of family pride here, you will say! True, and that is exactly the reason which made me cherish family pride elsewhere. My father's house was filled with guests, — some high and some low; they all united in ridicule of the host. I soon detected the laughter, and you may imagine that it did not please me. Meanwhile the old huntsman, whose family was about as ancient as ours, and whose ancestors had officiated in his capacity for the ancestors of his master time out of mind, told me story after story about the Brandons of yore. I turned from the stories to more legitimate history, and found the legends were tolerably true. I learned to glow at this discovery; the pride, humbled when I remembered my sire,

revived when I remembered my ancestors. I became resolved to emulate them, to restore a sunken name, and vowed a world of nonsense on the subject. The habit of brooding over these ideas grew on me. I never heard a jest broken on my paternal guardian, I never caught the maudlin look of his reeling eyes, nor listened to some exquisite inanity from his besotted lips, but that my thoughts flew instantly back to the Sir Charleses and the Sir Roberts of my race, and I comforted myself with the hope that the present degeneracy should pass away. Hence, Julia, my family pride; hence, too, another feeling you dislike in me, — disdain! I first learned to despise my father, the host, and I then despised my acquaintances, his guests; for I saw, while they laughed at him, that they flattered, and that their merriment was not the only thing suffered to feed at his expense. Thus contempt grew up with me, and I had nothing to check it; for when I looked around I saw not one living thing that I could respect. This father of mine had the sense to think I was no idiot. He was proud (poor man!) of ‘my talents,’ — namely, of prizes won at school, and congratulatory letters from my masters. He sent me to college. My mind took a leap there; I will tell you, prettiest, what it was! Before I went thither I had some fine vague visions about virtue. I thought to revive my ancestral honours by being good; in short, I was an embryo King Pepin. I awoke from this dream at the University. There, for the first time, I perceived the real consequence of rank.

“At school, you know, Julia, boys care nothing for a lord. A good cricketer, an excellent fellow, is worth all the earls in the peerage. But at college all *that* ceases; bats and balls sink into the nothingness in which corals and bells had sunk before. One grows manly, and worships coronets and carriages. I saw it was a fine thing to get a prize, but it was ten times a finer thing to get drunk with a peer. So, when I had done the first, my resolve to be worthy of my sires made me do the second, — not, indeed, exactly; I never got *drunk*: my father disgusted me with that vice betimes. To his gluttony I owe my vegetable diet, and to his inebriety my addiction to water. No, I did not get drunk with peers; but I was just as agreeable to them as if I had been equally embruted. I knew intimately all the ‘Hats’¹ in the University, and I was henceforth looked up to by the ‘Caps,’ as if my head had gained the height of every hat that I knew. But I did not do this immediately. I must tell you two little anecdotes that first initiated me into the secret of real greatness.

¹ At Cambridge the sons of noblemen and the eldest sons of baronets are allowed to wear hats instead of the academical cap.

"The first was this: I was sitting at dinner with some fellows of a college, grave men and clever. Two of them, not knowing me, were conversing about me; they heard, they said, that I should never be so good a fellow as my father, — have such a cellar or keep such a house. 'I have met six earls there and a marquess,' quoth the other senior. 'And his son,' returned the first don, 'only keeps company with sizars, I believe.' 'So then,' said I to myself, 'to deserve the praise even of clever men, one must have good wines, know plenty of earls, and forswear sizars.' Nothing could be truer than my conclusion.

"Anecdote the second is this: On the day I gained a high university prize I invited my friends to dine with me. Four of them refused because they were engaged (they had been asked *since* I asked them), — to whom? the richest man at the University. These occurrences, happening at the same time, threw me into a profound revery. I awoke, and became a man of the world. I no longer resolved to be virtuous, and to hunt after the glory of your Romans and your Athenians, — I resolved to become rich, powerful, and of worldly repute.

"I abjured my honest sizars, and as I said before, I courted some rich 'Hats.' Behold my first grand step in the world! I became the parasite and the flatterer. What! would my pride suffer this? Verily, yes, my pride delighted in it; for it soothed my spirit of contempt to put these fine fellows to my use! It soothed me to see how easily I could cajole them, and to what a variety of purposes I could apply even the wearisome disgust of their acquaintance. Nothing is so foolish as to say the idle great are of no use; they can be put to any use whatsoever that a wise man is inclined to make of them. Well, Julia, lo! my character already formed; the family pride, disdain, and worldly ambition, — there it is for you. After circumstances only strengthened the impression already made. I desired, on leaving college, to go abroad; my father had no money to give me. What signified that? I looked carelessly around for some wealthier convenience than the paternal hoard; I found it in a Lord Mauleverer. He had been at college with me, and I endured him easily as a companion, — for he had accomplishments, wit, and good-nature. I made him wish to go abroad, and I made him think he should die of *ennui* if I did not accompany him. To his request to that effect I *reluctantly* agreed, and saw everything in Europe, which he neglected to see, at his expense. What amused me the most was the perception that I, the parasite, was respected by him; and he, the patron, was ridiculed by me! It would not have been so if I had depended on 'my virtue.' Well, sweetest Julia, the world, as I have said, gave to my college experience a sacred authority. I returned to England; and my father died, leaving to me not a sixpence, and to

my brother an estate so mortgaged that he could no enjoy it, and so restricted that he could not sell it. It was now the time for me to profit by the experience I boasted of. I saw that it was necessary I should take some profession. Professions are the masks to your pauper-rogue; they give respectability to cheating, and a diploma to feed upon others. I analyzed my talents, and looked to the customs of my country; the result was my resolution to take to the Bar. I had an inexhaustible power of application; I was keen, shrewd, and audacious. All these qualities 'tell' at the courts of justice. I kept my legitimate number of terms; I was called; I went the circuit; I obtained not a brief, — not a brief, Julia! My health, never robust, gave way beneath study and irritation. I was ordered to betake myself to the country. I came to this village, as one both salubrious and obscure. I lodged in the house of your aunt; you came hither daily, — I saw you, — you know the rest. But where, all this time, were my noble friends? you will say. 'Sdeath, since we had left college, they had learned a little of the wisdom I had *then* possessed; they were not disposed to give something for nothing; they had younger brothers, and cousins, and mistresses, and, for aught I know, children to provide for. Besides, they had their own expenses; the richer a man is, the less he has to give. One of them would have bestowed on me a living, if I had gone into the Church; another, a commission if I had joined his regiment. But I knew the day was past both for priest and soldier; and it was not merely to live, no, nor to live comfortably, but to enjoy power, that I desired; so I declined these offers. Others of my friends would have been delighted to have kept me in their house, feasted me, joked with me, rode with me, nothing more! But I had already the sense to see that if a man dances himself into distinction, it is never by the steps of attendance. One must receive favours and court patronage, but it must be with the air of an independent man. My old friends thus rendered useless, my legal studies forbade me to make new, nay, they even estranged me from the old; for people may say what they please about a similarity of opinions being necessary to friendship, — a similarity of habits is much more so. It is the man you dine, breakfast, and lodge with, walk, ride, gamble, or thief with, that is your friend; not the man who likes Virgil as well as you do, and agrees with you in an admiration of Handel. Meanwhile my chief prey, Lord Mauleverer, was gone; he had taken another man's Dulcinea, and sought out a bower in Italy. From that time to this I have never heard of him nor seen him; I know not even his address. With the exception of a few stray gleanings from my brother, who, good easy man! I could plunder more, were I not resolved not to ruin the family stock, I have been thrown on myself; the result is

that, though as clever as my fellows, I have narrowly shunned starvation, — had my wants been less simple, there would have been no shunning in the case; but a man is not easily starved who drinks water, and eats by the ounce. A more effectual fate might have befallen me. Disappointment, wrath, baffled hope, mortified pride, all these, which gnawed at my heart, might have consumed it long ago; I might have fretted away as a garment which the moth eateth, had it not been for that fund of obstinate and iron hardness which nature — I beg pardon, there is no nature — *circumstance* bestowed upon me. This has borne me up, and will bear me yet through time and shame and bodily weakness and mental fever, until my ambition has won a certain height, and my disdain of human pettiness rioted in the external sources of fortune, as well as an inward fountain of bitter and self-fed consolation. Yet, oh, Julia! I know not if even this would have supported me, if at that epoch of life, when I was most wounded, most stricken in body, most soured in mind, my heart had not met and fastened itself to yours. I saw you, loved you; and life became to me a new object. Even now, as I write to you, all my bitterness, my pride, vanish; everything I have longed for disappears; my very ambition is gone. I have no hope but for you, Julia; beautiful, adored Julia! when I love you, I love even my kind. Oh, you know not the power you possess over me! Do not betray it; you can yet make me all that my boyhood once dreamed, or you can harden every thought, feeling, sensation, into stone.

“I was to tell you why I look not for happiness in our union. You have now seen my nature. You have traced the history of my life, by tracing the history of my character. You see what I surrender in gaining you. I do not deny the sacrifice. I surrender the very essentials of my present mind and soul. I cease to be worldly. I cannot raise myself, I cannot revive my ancestral name; nay, I shall relinquish it forever. I shall adopt a disguised appellation. I shall sink into another grade of life. In some remote village, by means of some humbler profession than that I now follow, we must earn our subsistence, and smile at ambition. I tell you frankly, Julia, when I close the eyes of my heart, when I shut you from my gaze, this sacrifice appalls me. But even then you force yourself before me, and I feel that one glance from your eye is more to me than all. If you could bear with me, — if you could soothe me, — if when a cloud is on me you could suffer it to pass away unnoticed, and smile on me the moment it is gone, — O Julia! there would be then no extreme of poverty, no abasement of fortune, no abandonment of early dreams which would not seem to me rapture if coupled with the bliss of knowing that you are mine. Never should

my lip, never should my eye tell you that there is that thing on earth for which I repine or which I could desire. No, Julia, could I flatter my heart with this hope, you would not find me dream of unhappiness and you united. But I tremble, Julia, when I think of your temper and my own; you will conceive a gloomy look from one never mirthful is an insult, and you will feel every vent of passion on Fortune or on others as a reproach to you. Then, too, you cannot enter into my nature; you cannot descend into its caverns; you cannot behold, much less can you deign to lull, the exacting and lynx-eyed jealousy that dwells there. Sweetest Julia! every breath of yours, every touch of yours, every look of yours, I yearn for beyond all a mother's longing for the child that has been torn from her for years. Your head leaned upon an old tree (do you remember it, near —?), and I went every day, after seeing you, to kiss it. Do you wonder that I am jealous? How can I love you as I do and be otherwise? My whole being is intoxicated with you!

“This then, your pride and mine, your pleasure in the admiration of others, your lightness, Julia, make me foresee an eternal and gushing source of torture to my mind. I care not; I care for nothing so that you are mine, if but for one hour.”

It seems that, despite the strange, sometimes the unlover-like and fiercely selfish nature of these letters from Brandon, something of a genuine tone of passion, — perhaps their originality, — aided, no doubt, by some *uttered* eloquence of the writer and some treacherous inclination on the part of the mistress, ultimately conquered; and that a union so little likely to receive the smile of a prosperous star was at length concluded. The letter which terminated the correspondence was from Brandon: it was written on the evening before the marriage, which, it appeared by the same letter, was to be private and concealed. After a rapturous burst of hope and joy, it continued thus: —

“Yes, Julia, I recant my words; I have no belief that you or I shall ever have cause hereafter for unhappiness. Those eyes that dwelt so tenderly on mine; that hand whose pressure lingers yet in every nerve of my frame; those lips turned so coyly, yet, shall I say, reluctantly from me, — all tell me that you love me; and my fears are banished. Love, which conquered my nature, will conquer the only thing I would

desire to see altered in yours. Nothing could ever make *me* adore you less, though you affect to dread it, — nothing but a knowledge that you are unworthy of me, that you have a thought for another; then I should not hate you. No; the privilege of my past existence would revive; I should revel in a luxury of contempt, I should despise you, I should mock you, and I should be once more what I was before I knew you. But why do I talk thus? My bride, my blessing, forgive me!"

.

In concluding our extracts from this correspondence, we wish the reader to note, first, that the love professed by Brandon seems of that vehement and corporeal nature which, while it is often the least durable, is often the most susceptible of the fiercest extremes of hatred or even of disgust; secondly, that the character opened by this sarcastic candour evidently required in a mistress either an utter devotion or a skilful address; and thirdly, that we have hinted at such qualities in the fair correspondent as did not seem sanguinely to promise either of these essentials.

While with a curled yet often with a quivering lip the austere and sarcastic Brandon slowly compelled himself to the task of proceeding through these monuments of former folly and youthful emotion, the further elucidation of those events, now rapidly urging on a fatal and dread catastrophe, spreads before us a narrative occurring many years prior to the time at which we are at present arrived.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Clem. Lift the dark veil of years ! Behind, what waits?

A human heart. Vast city, where reside
All glories and all vilenesses ; while foul,
Yet silent, through the roar of passions rolls
The river of the Darling Sin, and bears
A life and yet a poison on its tide.

Clem. Thy wife ?

Vict. Avaunt ! I've changed that word to "scorn" !

Clem. Thy child ?

Vict. Ay, that strikes home, — my child, my child !

Love and Hatred, by ———.

To an obscure town in —shire there came to reside a young couple, whose appearance and habits drew towards them from the neighbouring gossips a more than ordinary attention. They bore the name of *Welford*. The man assumed the profession of a solicitor. He came without introduction or recommendation; his manner of life bespoke poverty; his address was reserved and even sour; and despite the notice and scrutiny with which he was regarded, he gained no clients and made no lawsuits. The want of all those decent *charlatanisms* which men of every profession are almost necessitated to employ, and the sudden and unushered nature of his coming were, perhaps, the cause of this ill-success. "His house was too small," people said, "for respectability." And little good could be got from a solicitor the very rails round whose door were so sadly in want of repainting ! Then, too, Mrs. Welford made a vast number of enemies. She was, beyond all expression, beautiful; and there was a certain coquetry in her manner which showed she was aware of her attractions. All the ladies of — hated her. A few people called on the young couple. Welford received them coldly; their invitations were unaccepted, and, what was worse, they were never returned. The devil himself could not have supported an

attorney under such circumstances. Reserved, shabby, poor, rude, introductionless, a bad house, an unpainted railing, and a beautiful wife! Nevertheless, though Welford was not employed, he was, as we have said, watched. On their first arrival, which was in summer, the young pair were often seen walking together in the fields or groves which surrounded their home. Sometimes they walked affectionately together, and it was observed with what care Welford adjusted his wife's cloak or shawl around her slender shape, as the cool of the evening increased. But often his arm was withdrawn; he lingered behind, and they continued their walk or returned homeward in silence and apart. By degrees whispers circulated throughout the town that the new-married couple lived by no means happily. The men laid the fault on the stern-looking husband; the women, on the minx of a wife. However, the solitary servant whom they kept declared that though Mr. Welford did sometimes frown, and Mrs. Welford did sometimes weep, they were extremely attached to each other, and only quarrelled through love. The maid had had four lovers herself, and was possibly experienced in such matters. They received no visitors, near or from a distance; and the postman declared he had never seen a letter directed to either. Thus a kind of mystery hung over the pair, and made them still more gazed on and still more disliked—which is saying a great deal—than they would have otherwise been. Poor as Welford was, his air and walk eminently bespoke what common persons term *gentility*. And in this he had greatly the advantage of his beautiful wife, who, though there was certainly nothing vulgar or plebeian in her aspect, altogether wanted the refinement of manner, look, and phrase which characterized Welford. For about two years they lived in this manner, and so frugally and tranquilly that though Welford had not any visible means of subsistence, no one could well wonder in what manner they *did* subsist. About the end of that time Welford suddenly embarked a small sum in a county speculation. In the course of this adventure, to the great surprise of his neighbours, he evinced an extraordinary turn for calculation, and his habits plainly bespoke a man

both of business and ability. This disposal of capital brought a sufficient return to support the Welfords, if they had been so disposed, in rather a better style than heretofore. They remained, however, in much the same state; and the only difference that the event produced was the retirement of Mr. Welford from the profession he had embraced. He was no longer a solicitor! It must be allowed that he resigned no great advantages in this retirement. About this time some officers were quartered at —; and one of them, a handsome lieutenant, was so struck with the charms of Mrs. Welford, whom he saw at church, that he lost no opportunity of testifying his admiration. It was maliciously yet not unfoundedly remarked that though no absolute impropriety could be detected in the manner of Mrs. Welford, she certainly seemed far from displeased with the evident homage of the young lieutenant. A blush tinged her cheek when she saw him; and the gallant coxcomb asserted that the blush was not always without a smile. Emboldened by the interpretations of his vanity, and contrasting, as every one else did, his own animated face and glittering garb with the ascetic and gloomy countenance, the unstudied dress, and austere gait which destroyed in Welford the effect of a really handsome person, our lieutenant thought fit to express his passion by a letter, which he conveyed to Mrs. Welford's pew. Mrs. Welford went not to church that day; the letter was found by a good-natured neighbour, and inclosed anonymously to the husband.

Whatever, in the secrecy of domestic intercourse, took place on this event was necessarily unknown; but the next Sunday the face of Mr. Welford, which had never before appeared at church, was discerned by one vigilant neighbour, — probably the anonymous friend, — not in the same pew with his wife, but in a remote corner of the sacred house. And once, when the lieutenant was watching to read in Mrs. Welford's face some answer to his epistle, the same obliging inspector declared that Welford's countenance assumed a sardonic and withering sneer that made his very blood to creep. However this be, the lieutenant left his quarters, and Mrs. Welford's reputation remained dissatisfactorily untarnished. Shortly

after this the county speculation failed, and it was understood that the Welfords were about to leave the town, whither none knew, — some said to jail; but then, unhappily, no debts could be discovered. Their bills had been “next to nothing;” but, at least, they had been regularly paid. However, before the rumoured emigration took place, a circumstance equally wonderful to the good people of — occurred. One bright spring morning a party of pleasure from a great house in the vicinity passed through that town. Most conspicuous of these was a young horseman, richly dressed, and of a remarkably showy and handsome appearance. Not a little sensible of the sensation he created, this cavalier lingered behind his companions in order to eye more deliberately certain damsels stationed in a window, and who were quite ready to return his glances with interest. At this moment the horse, which was fretting itself fiercely against the rein that restrained it from its fellows, took a fright at a knife-grinder, started violently to one side, and the graceful cavalier, who had been thinking, not of the attitude best adapted to preserve his equilibrium, but to display his figure, was thrown with some force upon a heap of bricks and rubbish which had long, to the scandal of the neighbourhood, stood before the paintless railings around Mr. Welford’s house. Welford himself came out at the time, and felt compelled — for he was by no means one whose sympathetic emotions flowed easily — to give a glance to the condition of a man who lay motionless before his very door. The horseman quickly recovered his senses, but found himself unable to rise; one of his legs was broken. Supported in the arms of his groom, he looked around, and his eye met Welford’s. An instant recognition gave life to the face of the former, and threw a dark blush over the sullen features of the latter.

“Heavens!” said the cavalier, “is that —”

“Hist, my lord!” cried Welford, quickly interrupting him, and glancing round. “But you are hurt, — will you enter my house?”

The horseman signified his assent, and, between the groom and Welford, was borne within the shabby door of the ex-

solicitor. The groom was then despatched with an excuse to the party, many of whom were already hastening around the house; and though one or two did force themselves across the inhospitable threshold, yet so soon as they had uttered a few expletives, and felt their stare sink beneath the sullen and chilling asperity of the host, they satisfied themselves that though it was d—d unlucky for their friend, yet they could do nothing for him at present; and promising to send to inquire after him the next day, they remounted and rode homeward, with an eye more attentive than usual to the motion of their steeds. They did not, however, depart till the surgeon of the town had made his appearance, and declared that the patient must not on any account be moved. A lord's leg was a windfall that did not happen every day to the surgeon of —. All this while we may imagine the state of anxiety experienced in the town, and the agonized endurance of those rural nerves which are produced in scanty populations, and have so *Taliacotian* a sympathy with the affairs of other people. One day, two days, three days, a week, a fortnight, nay, a month, passed, and the lord was still the inmate of Mr. Welford's abode. Leaving the gossips to feed on their curiosity, — "cannibals of their own hearts," — we must give a glance towards the interior of the inhospitable mansion of the ex-solicitor.

It was towards evening, the sufferer was supported on a sofa, and the beautiful Mrs. Welford, who had officiated as his nurse, was placing the pillow under the shattered limb. He himself was attempting to seize her hand, which she coyly drew back, and uttering things sweeter and more polished than she had ever listened to before. At this moment Welford softly entered; he was unnoticed by either; and he stood at the door contemplating them with a smile of calm and self-hugging derision. The face of Mephistopheles regarding Margaret and Faust might suggest some idea of the picture we design to paint; but the countenance of Welford was more lofty, as well as comelier, in character, though not less malignant in expression, than that which the incomparable Retsch has given to the mocking fiend. So utter, so con-

gratulatory, so lordly was the contempt on Welford's dark and striking features, that though he was in that situation in which ridicule usually attaches itself to the husband, it was the gallant and the wife that would have appeared to the beholder in a humiliating and unenviable light.

After a momentary pause Welford approached with a heavy step. The wife started; but with a bland and smooth expression, which since his sojourn in the town of —— had been rarely visible in his aspect, the host joined the pair, smiled on the nurse, and congratulated the patient on his progress towards recovery. The nobleman, well learned in the usages of the world, replied easily and gayly; and the conversation flowed on cheerfully enough till the wife, who had sat abstracted and apart, stealing ever and anon timid glances towards her husband and looks of a softer meaning towards the patient, retired from the room. Welford then gave a turn to the conversation; he reminded the nobleman of the pleasant days they had passed in Italy, — of the adventures they had shared, and the intrigues they had enjoyed. As the conversation warmed, it assumed a more free and licentious turn; and not a little, we ween, would the good folks of —— have been amazed, could they have listened to the gay jests and the libertine maxims which flowed from the thin lips of that cold and severe Welford, whose countenance gave the lie to mirth. Of women in general they spoke with that lively contempt which is the customary tone with men of the world; only in Welford it assumed a bitterer, a deeper, and a more philosophical cast than it did in his more animated yet less energetic guest.

The nobleman seemed charmed with his friend; the conversation was just to his taste; and when Welford had supported him up to bed, he shook that person cordially by the hand, and hoped he should soon see him in very different circumstances. When the peer's door was closed on Welford, he stood motionless for some moments; he then with a soft step ascended to his own chamber. His wife slept soundly; beside the bed was the infant's cradle. As his eyes fell on the latter, the rigid irony, now habitual to his features, relaxed; he

bent over the cradle long and in deep silence. The mother's face, blended with the sire's, was stamped on the sleeping and cherub countenance before him; and as at length, rousing from his revery, he kissed it gently, he murmured, —

“When I look on you I will believe that she once loved me. Pah!” he said abruptly, and rising, “this fatherly sentiment for a ——’s offering is exquisite in *me!*” So saying, without glancing towards his wife, who, disturbed by the loudness of his last words, stirred uneasily, he left the room, and descended into that where he had conversed with his guest. He shut the door with caution, and striding to and fro the humble apartment, gave vent to thoughts marshalled somewhat in the broken array in which they now appear to the reader:—

“Ay, ay, she has been my ruin! and if I were one of your weak fools who make a gospel of the silliest and most mawkish follies of this social state, she would now be my disgrace; but instead of my disgrace, I will make her my footstool to honour and wealth. And, then, to the devil with the footstool! Yes! two years I have borne what was enough to turn my whole blood into gall, — inactivity, hopelessness, a wasted heart and life in myself; contumely from the world; coldness, bickering, ingratitude from the one for whom (oh, ass that I was!) I gave up the most cherished part of my nature, — rather, my nature itself! Two years I have borne this, and now will I have my revenge. I will sell her, — sell her! God! I will sell her like the commonest beast of a market! And this paltry piece of false coin shall buy me — my world! Other men’s vengeance comes from hatred, — a base, rash, unphilosophical sentiment! mine comes from scorn, — the only wise state for the reason to rest in. Other men’s vengeance ruins themselves; mine shall save me! Ha! how my soul chuckles when I look at this pitiful pair, who think I see them not, and know that every movement they make is on a mesh of my web! Yet,” and Welford paused slowly, — “yet I cannot but mock myself when I think of the arch gull that this boy’s madness, love, — love, indeed! the very word turns me sick with loathing, — made of me. Had that woman,

silly, weak, automatal as she is, really loved me; had she been sensible of the unspeakable sacrifice I had made to her (Antony's was nothing to it, — he lost a real world only; mine was the world of imagination); had she but condescended to learn my nature, to subdue the woman's devil at her own, — I could have lived on in this babbling hermitage forever, and fancied myself happy and resigned, — I could have become a different being. I fancy I could have become what your moralists (quacks!) call 'good.' But this fretting frivolity of heart, this lust of fool's praise, this peevishness of temper, this sullenness in answer to the moody thought, which in me she neither fathomed nor forgave, this vulgar, daily, hourly pining at the paltry pinches of the body's poverty, the domestic whine, the household complaint, — when I — I have not a thought for such pitiful trials of affection; and all this while my curses, my buried hope and disguised spirit and sunken name not thought of; the magnitude of my surrender to her not even comprehended; nay, her 'inconveniences' — a dim hearth, I suppose, or a daintiless table — compared, ay, absolutely compared, with all which I abandoned for her sake! As if it were not enough, — had I been a fool, an ambitionless, soulless fool, — the mere thought that I had linked my name to that of a tradesman, — I beg pardon, a *retired* tradesman! — as if that knowledge — a knowledge I would strangle my whole race, every one who has ever met, seen me, rather than they should penetrate — were not enough, when she talks of 'comparing,' to make me gnaw the very flesh from my bones! No, no, no! Never was there so bright a turn in my fate as when this titled coxcomb, with his smooth voice and gaudy fripperies, came hither! I will make her a tool to carve my escape from this cavern wherein she has plunged me. I will foment 'my lord's' passion, till 'my lord' thinks 'the passion' (a butterfly's passion!) worth any price. I will then make my own terms, bind 'my lord' to secrecy, and get rid of my wife, my shame, and the obscurity of Mr. Welford forever. Bright, bright prospects! let me shut my eyes to enjoy you! But softly! my noble friend calls himself a man of the world, skilled in human nature,

and a derider of its prejudices; true enough, in his own little way — thanks not to enlarged views, but a vicious experience — so he is! The book of the world is a vast miscellany; he is perfectly well acquainted, doubtless, with those pages that treat of the fashions, — profoundly versed, I warrant, in the ‘Magasin des Modes’ tacked to the end of the index. But shall I, even with all the mastership which my mind *must* exercise over his, — shall I be able utterly to free myself in this ‘peer of the world’s’ mind from a degrading remembrance? Cuckold! cuckold! ’t is an ugly word; a convenient, willing cuckold, humph! — there is no grandeur, no philosophical varnish in the phrase. Let me see — yes! I have a remedy for all that. I was married privately, — well! under disguised names, — well! It was a stolen marriage, far from her town, — well! witnesses unknown to her, — well! proofs easily secured to my possession, — excellent! The fool shall believe it a forged marriage, an ingenious gallantry of mine; I will wash out the stain cuckold with the water of another word; I will make market of a mistress, not a *wife*. I will warn him not to acquaint *her* with this secret; let me consider for what reason, — oh! my son’s legitimacy *may* be convenient to me hereafter. He will understand that reason, and I will have his ‘honour’ thereon. And by the way, I do care for that legitimacy, and will guard the proofs. I love my child, — ambitious men do love their children. I may become a lord myself, and may wish for a lord to succeed me; and that son is mine, thank Heaven! I am sure on that point, — the only child, too, that ever shall arise to me. Never, I swear, will I again put myself beyond my own power! All my nature, save one passion, I have hitherto mastered; that passion shall henceforth be my slave, my only thought be ambition, my only mistress be the world!”

As thus terminated the revery of a man whom the social circumstances of the world were calculated, as if by system, to render eminently and basely wicked, Welford slowly ascended the stairs, and re-entered his chamber. His wife was still sleeping. Her beauty was of the fair and girlish and harmonized order, which lovers and poets would express

by the word "angelic;" and as Welford looked upon her face, hushed and almost hallowed by slumber, a certain weakness and irresolution might have been discernible in the strong lines of his haughty features. At that moment, as if forever to destroy the return of hope or virtue to either, her lips moved, they uttered one word, — it was the name of Welford's courtly guest.

About three weeks from that evening Mrs. Welford eloped with the young nobleman, and on the morning following that event the distracted husband with his child disappeared forever from the town of —. From that day no tidings whatsoever respecting him ever reached the titillated ears of his anxious neighbours; and doubt, curiosity, discussion, gradually settled into the belief that his despair had hurried him into suicide.

Although the unfortunate Mrs. Welford was in reality of a light and frivolous turn, and, above all, susceptible to personal vanity, she was not without ardent affections and keen sensibilities. Her marriage had been one of love,—that is to say, on her part, the ordinary love of girls, who love not through actual and natural feeling so much as forced predisposition. Her choice had fallen on one superior to herself in birth, and far above all, in person and address, whom she had habitually met. Thus her vanity had assisted her affection, and something strange and eccentric in the temper and mind of Welford had, though at times it aroused her fear, greatly contributed to inflame her imagination. Then, too, though an uncourtly, he had been a passionate and a romantic lover. She was sensible that he gave up for her much that he had previously conceived necessary to his existence; and she stopped not to inquire how far this devotion was likely to last, or what conduct on her part might best perpetuate the feelings from which it sprang. She had eloped with him. She had consented to a private marriage. She had passed one happy month, and then delusion vanished! Mrs. Welford was not a woman who could give to reality, or find in it, the charm equal to delusion. She was perfectly unable to comprehend the intricate and dangerous character of her husband.

She had not the key to his virtues, nor the spell for his vices. Neither was the state to which poverty compelled them one well calculated for that tender meditation, heightened by absence and cherished in indolence, which so often supplies one who loves with the secret to the nature of the one beloved. Though not equal to her husband in birth or early prospects, Mrs. Welford had been accustomed to certain comforts, often more felt by those who belong to the inferior classes than by those appertaining to the more elevated, who in losing one luxury will often cheerfully surrender all. A fine lady can submit to more hardships than her woman; and every gentleman who travels smiles at the privations which agonize his valet. Poverty and its grim comrades made way for a whole host of petty irritations and peevish complaints; and as no guest or visitor ever relieved the domestic discontent, or broke on the domestic bickering, they generally ended in that moody sullenness which so often finds love a grave in repentance. Nothing makes people tire of each other like a familiarity that admits of carelessness in quarrelling and coarseness in complaining. The biting sneer of Welford gave acrimony to the murmur of his wife; and when once each conceived the other the injurer, or him or herself the wronged, it was vain to hope that one would be more wary, or the other more indulgent. They both exacted too much, and the wife in especial conceded too little. Mrs. Welford was altogether and emphatically what a libertine calls "a woman," — *such as a frivolous education makes a woman*, — generous in great things, petty in small; vain, irritable, full of the littleness of herself and her complaints, ready to plunge into an abyss with her lover, but equally ready to fret away all love with reproaches when the plunge had been made. Of all men, Welford could bear this the least. A woman of a larger heart, a more settled experience, and an intellect capable of appreciating his character and sounding all his qualities, might have made him perhaps a useful and a great man, and, at least, *her* lover for life. Amidst a harvest of evil feelings the mere strength of his nature rendered him especially capable of intense feeling and generous emotion. One who

relied on him was safe; one who rebelled against him trusted only to the caprice of his scorn. Still, however, for two years, love, though weakening with each hour, fought on in either breast, and could scarcely be said to be entirely vanquished in the *wife*, even when she eloped with her handsome seducer. A French writer has said pithily enough: "Compare for a moment the apathy of a husband with the attention, the gallantry, the adoration of a lover, and *can* you ask the result?" He was a *French* writer; but Mrs. Welford had in her temper much of the Frenchwoman. A suffering patient, young, handsome, well versed in the arts of intrigue, contrasted with a gloomy husband whom she had never comprehended, long feared, and had lately doubted if she disliked, — ah! a much weaker contrast has made many a much better woman food for the lawyers! Mrs. Welford eloped; but she felt a revived tenderness for her husband on the very morning that she did so. She carried away with her his letters of love as well as her own, which when they first married she had in an hour of fondness collected together, — *then* an inestimable hoard! — and never did her new lover receive from her beautiful lips half so passionate a kiss as she left on the cheek of her infant. For some months she enjoyed with her paramour all for which she had sighed in her home. The one for whom she had forsaken her legitimate ties was a person so habitually cheerful, courteous, and what is ordinarily termed "good-natured" (though he had in him as much of the essence of selfishness as any nobleman can decently have), that he continued gallant to her without an effort long after he had begun to think it possible to tire even of so lovely a face. Yet there were moments when the fickle wife recalled her husband with regret, and contrasting him with her seducer, did not find all the colourings of the contrast flattering to the latter. There is something in a powerful and marked character which women and all weak natures feel themselves constrained to respect; and Welford's character thus stood in bold and therefore advantageous though gloomy relief when opposed to the levities and foibles of this guilty woman's present adorer. However this be, the die was cast; and it would have been policy for

the lady to have made the best of her present game. But she who had murmured as a wife was not complaisant as a mistress. Reproaches made an interlude to caresses, which the noble lover by no means admired. He was not a man to retort, he was too indolent; but neither was he one to forbear. "My charming friend," said he one day, after a scene, "you weary of me, — nothing more natural! Why torment each other? You say I have ruined you; my sweet friend, let me make you reparation. Become independent; I will settle an annuity upon you; fly me, — seek happiness elsewhere, and leave your unfortunate, your despairing lover to his fate."

"Do you taunt me, my lord?" cried the angry fair; "or do you believe that money can replace the rights of which you have robbed me? Can you make me again a wife, — a happy, a respected wife? Do this, my lord, and you atone to me!"

The nobleman smiled, and shrugged his shoulders. The lady yet more angrily repeated her question. The lover answered by an innuendo, which at once astonished and doubly enraged her. She eagerly demanded explanation; and his lordship, who had gone further than he intended, left the room. But his words had sunk deep into the breast of this unhappy woman, and she resolved to procure an elucidation. Agreeably to the policy which stripped the fabled traveller of his cloak, she laid aside the storm and preferred the sunshine: she watched a moment of tenderness, turned the opportunity to advantage, and by little and little she possessed herself of a secret which sickened her with shame, disgust, and dismay. Sold! bartered! the object of a contemptuous huxtering to the purchaser and the seller; sold, too, with a lie that debased her at once into an object for whom even pity was mixed with scorn! Robbed already of the name and honour of a wife, and transferred as a harlot from the wearied arms of one leman to the capricious caresses of another! Such was the image that rose before her; and while it roused at one moment all her fiercer passions into madness, humbled, with the next, her vanity into the dust. She, who knew the ruling passion of Welford, saw at a glance the object of scorn and derision which she had become to

him. While she imagined herself the betrayer, she had been betrayed; she saw vividly before her (and shuddered as she saw) her husband's icy smile, his serpent eye, his features steeped in sarcasm, and all his mocking soul stamped upon the countenance, whose lightest derision was so galling. She turned from this picture, and saw the courtly face of the purchaser, — his subdued smile at her reproaches, — his latent sneer at her claims to a station which he had been taught by the arch plotter to believe she had never possessed. She saw his early weariness of her attractions, expressed with respect indeed, — an insulting respect, — but felt without a scruple of remorse. She saw in either — as around — only a reciprocation of contempt. She was in a web of profound abasement. Even that haughty grief of conscience for crime committed to another, which if it stings humbles not, was swallowed up in a far more agonizing sensation, to one so vain as the adulteress, — the burning sense of shame at having herself, while sinning, been the duped and deceived. Her very soul was appalled with her humiliation. The curse of Welford's vengeance was on her, and it was wreaked to the last! Whatever kindly sentiment she might have experienced towards her protector, was swallowed up at once by this discovery. She could not endure the thought of meeting the eye of one who had been the gainer by this ignominious barter; the foibles and weaknesses of the lover assumed a despicable as well as hateful dye. And in feeling *herself* degraded, she loathed *him*. The day after she had made the discovery we have referred to, Mrs. Welford left the house of her protector, none knew whither. For two years from that date, all trace of her history was lost. At the end of that time what was Welford? A man rapidly rising in the world, distinguished at the Bar, where his first brief had lifted him into notice, commencing a flattering career in the senate, holding lucrative and honourable offices, esteemed for the austere rectitude of his moral character, gathering the golden opinions of all men, as he strode onward to public reputation. He had re-assumed his hereditary name; his early history was unknown; and no one in the obscure and distant town of — had

ever guessed that the humble Welford was the William Brandon whose praise was echoed in so many journals, and whose rising genius was acknowledged by all. That asperity, roughness, and gloom which had noted him at —, and which, being natural to him, he deigned not to disguise in a station ungenial to his talents and below his hopes, were now glitteringly varnished over by an hypocrisy well calculated to aid his ambition. So learnedly could this singular man fit himself to others that few among the great met him as a companion, nor left him without the temper to become his friend. Through his noble rival—that is (to make our reader's "surety doubly sure"), through Lord Mauleverer—he had acquired his first lucrative office, a certain patronage from government, and his seat in parliament. If he had persevered at the Bar rather than given himself entirely to State intrigues, it was only because his talents were eminently more calculated to advance him in the former path to honour than in the latter. So devoted was he become to public life that he had only permitted himself to cherish one private source of enjoyment,—his son. As no one, not even his brother, knew he had been married (during the two years of his disguised name, he had been supposed abroad), the appearance of this son made the only piece of scandal whispered against the rigid morality of his fair fame; but he himself, waiting his own time for avowing a legitimate heir, gave out that it was the orphan child of a dear friend whom he had known abroad; and the puritan demureness not only of life, but manner, which he assumed, gained a pretty large belief to the statement. This son Brandon idolized. As we have represented himself to say, ambitious men are commonly fond of their children, beyond the fondness of other sires. The perpetual reference which the ambitious make to posterity is perhaps the main reason. But Brandon was also fond of children generally; philoprogenitiveness was a marked trait in his character, and would seem to belie the hardness and artifice belonging to that character, were not the same love so frequently noticeable in the harsh and the artificial. It seems as if a half-conscious but pleasing feeling that *they*

too were once gentle and innocent, makes them delight in reviving any sympathy with their early state.

Often after the applause and labour of the day, Brandon would repair to his son's chamber and watch his slumber for hours; often before his morning toil commenced, he would nurse the infant in his arms with all a woman's natural tenderness and gushing joy; and often, as a graver and more characteristic sentiment stole over him, he would mentally say, "You shall build up our broken name on a better foundation than your sire. I begin too late in life, and I labour up a painful and stony road; but I shall make the journey to Fame smooth and accessible for you. Never, too, while *you* aspire to honour, shall you steel your heart to tranquillity. For you, my child, shall be the joys of home and love, and a mind that does not sicken at the past, and strain, through mere forgetfulness, towards a solitary and barren distinction for the future. Not only what your father gains you shall enjoy, but what has cursed him his vigilance shall lead you to shun!"

It was thus not only that his softer feelings, but all the better and nobler ones, which even in the worst and hardest bosom find some root, turned towards his child, and that the hollow and vicious man promised to become the affectionate and perhaps the wise parent.

One night Brandon was returning home on foot from a ministerial dinner. The night was frosty and clear, the hour was late, and his way lay through the longest and best-lighted streets of the metropolis. He was, as usual, buried in thought, when he was suddenly aroused from his reverie by a light touch laid on his arm. He turned, and saw one of the unhappy persons who haunt the midnight streets of cities, standing right before his path. The gaze of each fell upon the other; and it was thus, for the first time since they laid their heads on the same pillow, that the husband met the wife. The skies were intensely clear, and the lamplight was bright and calm upon the faces of both. There was no doubt in the mind of either. Suddenly, and with a startled and ghastly consciousness, they recognized each other. The wife staggered, and

clung to a post for support; Brandon's look was calm and unmoved. The hour that his bitter and malignant spirit had yearned for was come; his nerves expanded in a voluptuous calmness, as if to give him a deliberate enjoyment of his hope fulfilled. Whatever the words that in that unwitnessed and almost awful interview passed between them, we may be sure that Brandon spared not one atom of his power. The lost and abandoned wife returned home; and all her nature, embruted as it had become by guilt and vile habits, hardened into revenge, — that preternatural feeling which may be termed the hope of despair.

Three nights from that meeting Brandon's house was broken into. Like the houses of many legal men, it lay in a dangerous and thinly populated outskirt of the town, and was easily accessible to robbery. He was awakened by a noise; he started, and found himself in the grasp of two men. At the foot of the bed stood a female, raising a light; and her face, haggard with searing passions, and ghastly with the leprous whiteness of disease and approaching death, glared full upon him.

"It is now *my* turn," said the female, with a grin of scorn which Brandon himself might have envied; "you have cursed me, and I return the curse! You have told me that my child shall never name me but to blush. Fool! I triumph over you; *you* he shall never know to his dying day! You have told me that to my child and my child's child (a long transmission of execration) my name — the name of the wife you basely sold to ruin and to hell — should be left as a legacy of odium and shame! Man, you shall teach that child no further lesson whatever: you shall know not whether he live or die, or have children to carry on your boasted race; or whether, if he have, those children be not outcasts of the earth, the accursed of man and God, the fit offspring of the thing you have made me. Wretch! I hurl back on you the denunciation with which, when we met three nights since, you would have crushed the victim of your own perfidy. You shall tread the path of your ambition childless and objectless and hopeless. Disease shall set her stamp upon your frame. The

worm shall batten upon your heart. You shall have honours and enjoy them not; you shall gain your ambition, and despair; you shall pine for your son, and find him not; or, if you find him, you shall curse the hour in which he was born. Mark me, man, — I am dying while I speak, — I know that I am a prophet in my curse. From this hour I am avenged, and *you* are my scorn!”

As the hardest natures sink appalled before the stony eye of the maniac, so, in the dead of the night, pinioned by ruffians, the wild and solemn voice, sharpened by passion and partial madness, of the ghastly figure before him curdling through his veins, even the haughty and daring character of William Brandon quailed! He uttered not a word. He was found the next morning bound by strong cords to his bed. He spoke not when he was released, but went in silence to his child's chamber, — the child was gone! Several articles of property were also stolen; the desperate tools the mother had employed worked not perhaps without their own reward.

We need scarcely add that Brandon set every engine and channel of justice in motion for the discovery of his son. All the especial shrewdness and keenness of his own character, aided by his professional experience, he employed for years in the same pursuit. Every research was wholly in vain; not the remotest vestige towards discovery could be traced until were found (we have recorded when) some of the articles that had been stolen. Fate treasured in her gloomy womb, altogether undescried by man, the hour and the scene in which the most ardent wish of William Brandon was to be realized.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

O FORTUNA, viris invida fortibus
 Quam non æqua bonis præmia dividis.

SENECA.

And as a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,
 Pants to the place from whence at first he flew.

Here, to the houseless child of want,
 My door is open still.

GOLDSMITH.

SLOWLY for Lucy waned the weeks of a winter which to her was the most dreary portion of life she had ever passed. It became the time for the judge to attend one of those periodical visitations so fraught with dread and dismay to the miserable inmates of the dark abodes which the complex laws of this country so bounteously supply, — those times of great hilarity and eating to the legal gentry, —

“Who feed on crimes and fatten on distress,
 And wring vile mirth from suffering’s last excess.”

Ah! excellent order of the world, which it is so wicked to disturb! How miraculously beautiful must be that system which makes wine out of the scorching tears of guilt; and from the suffocating suspense, the agonized fear, the compelled and self-mocking bravery, the awful sentence, the despairing death-pang of one man, furnishes the smirking expectation of fees, the jovial meeting, and the mercenary holiday to another! “Of Law, nothing less can be said than that her seat is the bosom of God.”¹ To be sure not; Richard Hooker, you are perfectly right. The divinity of a sessions and the inspiration of the Old Bailey are undeniable!

¹ Hooker’s Ecclesiastical Polity.

The care of Sir William Brandon had effectually kept from Lucy's ear the knowledge of her lover's ignominious situation. Indeed, in her delicate health even the hard eye of Brandon and the thoughtless glance of Mauleverer perceived the danger of such a discovery. The earl, now waiting the main attack on Lucy till the curtain had forever dropped on Clifford, proceeded with great caution and delicacy in his suit to his purposed bride. He waited with the more patience inasmuch as he had drawn in advance on his friend Sir William for some portion of the heiress's fortune; and he readily allowed that he could not in the mean while have a better advocate than he found in Brandon. So persuasive, indeed, and so subtle was the eloquence of this able sophist, that often in his artful conversations with his niece he left even on the unvitiated and strong though simple mind of Lucy an uneasy and restless impression, which time might have ripened into an inclination towards the worldly advantages of the marriage at her command. Brandon was no bungling mediator or violent persecutor. He seemed to acquiesce in her rejection of Mauleverer. He scarcely recurred to the event. He rarely praised the earl himself, save for the obvious qualities of liveliness and good-nature. But he spoke, with all the vivid colours he could infuse at will into his words, of the pleasures and the duties of rank and wealth. Well could he appeal alike to all the prejudices and all the foibles of the human breast, and govern virtue through its weaknesses. Lucy had been brought up, like the daughters of most country gentlemen of ancient family, in an undue and idle consciousness of superior birth; and she was far from inaccessible to the warmth and even feeling (for *here* Brandon was sincere) with which her uncle spoke of the duty of raising a gallant name sunk into disrepute, and sacrificing our own inclination for the redecorating the mouldered splendour of those who have gone before us. If the confusion of idea occasioned by a vague pomposity of phrase, or the infant inculcation of a sentiment that is mistaken for a virtue, so often makes fools of the wise on the subject of ancestry; if it clouded even the sarcastic and keen sense of Brandon himself,

we may forgive its influence over a girl so little versed in the arts of sound reasoning as poor Lucy, who, it may be said, had never learned to think until she had learned to love. However, the impression made by Brandon, in his happiest moments of persuasion, was as yet only transient; it vanished before the first thought of Clifford, and never suggested to her even a doubt as to the suit of Mauleverer.

When the day arrived for Sir William Brandon to set out on the circuit, he called Barlow, and enjoined on that acute and intelligent servant the strictest caution with respect to Lucy. He bade him deny her to every one, of whatever rank, and carefully to look into every newspaper that was brought to her, as well as to withhold every letter, save such as were addressed to her in the judge's own handwriting. Lucy's maid Brandon had already won over to silence; and the uncle now pleased himself with thinking that he had put an effectual guard to every chance of discovery. The identity of Lovett with Clifford had not yet even been rumoured; and Mauleverer had rightly judged of Clifford, when he believed the prisoner would himself take every precaution against the detection of that fact. Clifford answered the earl's note, and promised, in a letter couched in so affecting yet so manly a tone of gratitude that even Brandon was touched when he read it. And since his confinement and partial recovery of health, the prisoner had kept himself closely secluded, and refused all visitors. Encouraged by this reflection, and the belief in the safety of his precautions, Brandon took leave of Lucy. "Farewell!" said he, as he embraced her affectionately. "Be sure that you write to me, and forgive me if I do not answer you punctually. Take care of yourself, my sweet niece, and let me see a fresher colour on that soft cheek when I return!"

"Take care of yourself rather, my dear, dear uncle," said Lucy, clinging to him and weeping, as of late her weakened nerves caused her to do at the least agitation. "Why may I not go with you? You have seemed to me paler than usual the last three or four days, and you complained yesterday. Do let me go with you. I will be no trouble, none at all; but I am sure you require a nurse."

"You want to frighten me, my pretty Lucy," said Brandon, shaking his head with a smile. "I am well, very well. I felt a strange rush of blood towards the head yesterday, it is true; but I feel to-day stronger and lighter than I have done for years. Once more, God bless you, my child!"

And Brandon tore himself away, and commenced his journey.

The wandering and dramatic course of our story now conducts us to an obscure lane in the metropolis, leading to the Thames, and makes us spectators of an affecting farewell between two persons, whom the injustice of fate and the persecutions of men were about perhaps forever to divide.

"Adieu, my friend!" said Augustus Tomlinson, as he stood looking full on that segment of the face of Edward Pepper which was left unconcealed by a huge hat and a red belcher handkerchief. Tomlinson himself was attired in the full costume of a dignified clergyman. "Adieu, my friend, since you *will* remain in England, — adieu! I am, I exult to say, no less sincere a patriot than you. Heaven be my witness, how long I looked repugnantly on poor Lovett's proposal to quit my beloved country. But all hope of life *here* is now over; and really, during the last ten days I have been so hunted from corner to corner, so plagued with polite invitations, similar to those given by a farmer's wife to her ducks, 'Dilly, dilly, dilly, come and be killed!' that my patriotism has been prodigiously cooled, and I no longer recoil from thoughts of self-banishment. 'The earth,' my dear Ned, as a Greek sage has very well observed, — 'the earth is the same everywhere!' and if I am asked for my home, I can point, like Anaxagoras, to heaven!"

"'Pon my soul, you affect me!" said Ned, speaking thick, either from grief or the pressure of the belcher handkerchief on his mouth; "it is quite beautiful to hear you talk!"

"Bear up, my dear friend," continued Tomlinson; "bear up against your present afflictions. What, to a man who fortifies himself by reason and by reflection on the shortness of

life, are the little calamities of the body? What is imprisonment or persecution or cold or hunger? By the by, you did not forget to put the sandwiches into my coat-pocket!"

"Hush!" whispered Ned, and he moved on involuntarily; "I see a man at the other end of the street."

"Let us quicken our pace," said Tomlinson; and the pair proceeded towards the river.

"And now," began Ned, who thought he might as well say something about himself; for hitherto Augustus, in the ardour of his friendship, had been only discussing his own plans, — "and now, — that is to say, when I leave you, — I shall hasten to dive for shelter, until the storm blows over. I don't much like living in a cellar and wearing a smock frock; but those concealments have something interesting in them, after all! The safest and snuggest place I know of is the *Pays Bas*, about Thames Court; so I think of hiring an apartment underground, and taking my meals at poor Lovett's old quarters, the Mug, — the police will never dream of looking in these vulgar haunts for a man of my fashion."

"You cannot then tear yourself from England?" said Tomlinson.

"No, hang it! the fellows are so cursed unmanly on the other side of the water. I hate their wine and their *parley woo*. Besides, there is no fun there."

Tomlinson, who was absorbed in his own thoughts, made no comment on his friend's excellent reasons against travel; and the pair now approached the brink of the river. A boat was in waiting to receive and conduct to the vessel in which he had taken his place for Calais the illustrious emigrant. But as Tomlinson's eye fell suddenly on the rude boatmen and the little boat which were to bear him away from his native land; as he glanced, too, across the blue waters, which a brisk wind wildly agitated, and thought how much rougher it would be at sea, where "his soul" invariably "sickened at the heaving wave," — a whole tide of deep and sorrowful emotions rushed upon him.

He turned away. The spot on which he stood was a piece of ground to be let (as a board proclaimed) upon a

building lease; below, descended the steps which were to conduct him to the boat; around, the desolate space allowed him to see in far and broad extent the spires and domes and chimneys of the great city whose inhabitants he might never plunder more. As he looked and looked, the tears started to his eyes, and with a gust of enthusiasm, little consonant with his temperate and philosophical character, he lifted his right hand from his black breeches-pocket, and burst into the following farewell to the metropolis of his native shores:—

“Farewell, my beloved London, farewell! Where shall I ever find a city like you? Never, till now, did I feel how inexpressibly dear you were to me. You have been my father and my brother and my mistress and my tailor and my shoemaker and my hatter and my cook and my wine-merchant! You and I never misunderstood each other. I did not grumble when I saw what fine houses and good strong boxes you gave to other men. No! I rejoiced at their prosperity. I delighted to see a rich man, — my only disappointment was in stumbling on a poor one. You gave riches to my neighbours; but, O generous London, you gave those neighbours to me! Magnificent streets, all Christian virtues abide within you! Charity is as common as smoke! Where, in what corner of the habitable world, shall I find human beings with so many superfluities? Where shall I so easily decoy, from benevolent credulity, those superfluities to myself? Heaven only knows, my dear, dear, darling London, what I lose in you! O public charities! O public institutions! O banks that belie mathematical axioms and make lots out of nothing! O ancient constitution always to be questioned! O modern improvements that never answer! O speculations! O companies! O usury laws which guard against usurers, by making as many as possible! O churches in which no one profits, save the parson, and the old women that let pews of an evening! O superb theatres, too small for parks, too enormous for houses, which exclude comedy and comfort, and have a monopoly for performing nonsense gigantically! O houses of plaster, built in a day! O palaces four yards high,

with a dome in the middle, meant to be invisible!¹ O shops worth thousands, and O shopkeepers not worth a shilling! O system of credit by which beggars are princes, and princes are beggars! O imprisonment for debt, which lets the mare be stolen, and then locks up the bridle! O sharpers, bubbles, senators, beaux, taverns, brothels, clubs, houses private and public!—O LONDON, in a word, receive my last adieu! Long may you flourish in peace and plenteousness! May your knaves be witty, and your fools be rich! May you alter only two things,—your damnable tricks of transportation and hanging! Those are your sole faults; but for those I would never desert you. Adieu!”

Here Tomlinson averted his head, and then hastily shaking the hand of Long Ned with a tremulous and warm grasp, he hurried down the stairs and entered the boat. Ned remained motionless for some moments, following him with his eyes as he sat at the end of the boat, waving a white pocket-handkerchief. At length a line of barges snatched him from the sight of the lingerer; and Ned, slowly turning away, muttered, —

“Yes, I have always heard that Dame Lobkins’s was the safest asylum for misfortune like mine. I will go forthwith in search of a lodging, and to-morrow I will make my breakfast at the Mug!”

Be it our pleasing task, dear reader, to *forestall* the good robber, and return, at the hour of sunrise on the day following Tomlinson’s departure, to the scene at which our story commenced. We are now once more at the house of Mrs. Margery Lobkins.

The room which served so many purposes was still the same as when Paul turned it into the arena of his mischievous pranks. The dresser, with its shelves of mingled delf and pewter, occupied its ancient and important station. Only it

¹ We must not suppose this apostrophe to be an anachronism. Tomlinson, of course, refers to some palace of *his* day; one of the boxes—Christmas boxes—given to the king by his economical nation of shopkeepers. We suppose it is either pulled down or blown down long ago; it is doubtless forgotten by this time, except by antiquaries. Nothing is so ephemeral as great houses built by the people. Your kings play the deuce with their playthings!

might be noticed that the pewter was more dull than of yore, and that sundry cracks made their erratic wanderings over the yellow surface of the delf. The eye of the mistress had become less keen than heretofore, and the care of the handmaid had, of necessity, relaxed. The tall clock still ticked in monotonous warning; the blanket-screen, haply innocent of soap since we last described it, many-storied and polyballaded, still unfolded its ample leaves "rich with the spoils of time;" the spit and the musket yet hung from the wall in amicable proximation. And the long, smooth form, "with many a holy text *thereon bestrewn*," still afforded rest to the weary traveller, and an object to the vacant stare of Mrs. Margery Lobkins, as she lolled in her opposite seat and forgot the world. But poor Piggy Lob! — *there* was the alteration! The soul of the woman was gone; the spirit had evaporated from the human bottle! She sat, with open mouth and glassy eye, in her chair, sidling herself to and fro, with the low, peevish sound of fretful age and bodily pain; sometimes this querulous murmur sharpened into a shrill but unmeaning scold: "There now, you gallows-bird! you has taken the swipes without chalking; you wants to cheat the poor widow; but I sees you, I does! Providence protects the aged and the innocent — Oh, oh! these twinges will be the death o' me. Where's Martha? You jade, you! you wiperous hussy, bring the tape; does n't you see how I suffers? Has you no bowels, to let a poor Christian cretur perish for want o' help! That's with 'em, that's the way! No one cares for I now, — no one has respect for the gray 'airs of the old!" And then the voice dwindled into the whimpering "tenor of its way."

Martha, a strapping wench with red hair streaming over her "hills of snow," was not, however, inattentive to the wants of her mistress. "Who knows," said she to a man who sat by the hearth, drinking tea out of a blue mug, and toasting with great care two or three huge rounds of bread for his own private and especial nutriment, — "who knows," said she, "what we may come to ourselves?" And, so saying, she placed a glowing tumbler by her mistress's elbow.

But in the sunken prostration of her intellect, the old

woman was insensible even to her consolation. She sipped and drank, it is true; but as if the stream warmed not the benumbed region through which it passed, she continued muttering in a crazed and groaning key, —

“Is this your gratitude, you serpent! Why does not you bring the tape, I tells you? Am I of a age to drink water like a ’oss, you nasty thing! Oh, to think as ever I should live to be desarted!”

Inattentive to these murmurs, which she felt unreasonable, the bouncing Martha now quitted the room to repair to her “upper household” avocations. The man at the hearth was the only companion left to the widow. Gazing at her for a moment, as she sat whining, with a rude compassion in his eye, and slowly munching his toast, which he had now buttered and placed in a delf plate on the hob, this person thus soothingly began: —

“Ah, Dame Lobkins, if so be as ’ow little Paul vas a vith you, it would be a gallows comfort to you in your latter hend!”

The name of Paul made the good woman incline her head towards the speaker; a ray of consciousness shot through her bedulled brain.

“Little Paul, — eh, sirs! where is Paul? Paul, I say, my ben cull. Alack! he’s gone, — left his poor old nurse to die like a cat in a cellar. Oh, Dummie, never live to be old, man! They leaves us to oursel’s, and then takes away all the lush with ’em! I has not a drop o’ comfort in the ’varsal world!”

Dummie, who at this moment had his own reasons for soothing the dame, and was anxious to make the most of the opportunity of a conversation as unwitnessed as the present, replied tenderly, and with a cunning likely to promote his end, reproached Paul bitterly for never having informed the dame of his whereabouts and his proceedings. “But come, dame,” he wound up, “come, I guess as how he is better nor all that, and that you need not beat your hold brains to think where he lies, or vot he’s a doing. Blow me tight, Mother Lob, — I ax pardon, Mrs. Margery, I should say, — if I would not give five bob, ay, and five to the tail o’ that, to know what

the poor lad is about; I takes a mortal hinterest in that 'ere chap!"

"Oh! oh!" groaned the old woman, on whose palsied sense the astute inquiries of Dummie Dunnaker fell harmless; "my poor sinful carcass! what a way it be in!"

Artfully again did Dummie Dunnaker, nothing defeated, renew his attack; but fortune does not always favour the wise, and it failed Dummie now, for a twofold reason, — first, because it was not possible for the dame to comprehend him; secondly, because even if it had been, she had nothing to reveal. *Some* of Clifford's pecuniary gifts had been conveyed anonymously, *all* without direction or date; and for the most part they had been appropriated by the sage Martha, into whose hands they fell, to her own private uses. Nor did the dame require Clifford's grateful charity; for she was a woman tolerably well off in this world, considering how near she was waxing to another. Longer, however, might Dummie have tried his unavailing way, had not the door of the inn creaked on its hinges, and the bulky form of a tall man in a smock-frock, but with a remarkably fine head of hair, darkened the threshold. He honoured the dame, who cast on him a lacklustre eye, with a sulky yet ambrosial nod, seized a bottle of spirits and a tumbler, lighted a candle, drew a small German pipe and a tobacco-box from his pouch, placed these several luxuries on a small table, wheeled it to a far corner of the room, and throwing himself into one chair, and his legs into another, he enjoyed the result of his pains in a moody and supercilious silence. Long and earnestly did the meek Dummie gaze on the face of the gentleman before him. It had been some years since he had last beheld it; but it was one which did not easily escape the memory; and although its proprietor was a man who had risen in the world, and had gained the height of his profession (a station far beyond the diurnal sphere of Dummie Dunnaker), and the humble purloiner was therefore astonished to encounter him in these lower regions, yet Dummie's recollection carried him back to a day when they had gone shares together without respect of persons, and been right jolly partners in the practical game of beggar my

neighbour. While, however, Dummie Dunnaker, who was a little inclined to be shy, deliberated as to the propriety of claiming acquaintanceship, a dirty boy, with a face which betokened the frost, as Dummie himself said, like a plum dying of the scarlet fever, entered the room, with a newspaper in his dexter paw.

"Great news! great news!" cried the urchin, imitating his vociferous originals in the street; "all about the famous Captain Lovett, as large as life!"

"'Old your blarney, you blattergowl!" said Dummie, rebukingly, and seizing the journal.

"Master says as how he must have it to send to Clapham, and can't spare it for more than a 'our!" said the boy, as he withdrew.

"*I* 'members the day," said Dummie, with the zeal of a clansman, "when the Mug took a paper all to itsel' instead o' 'iring it by the job like!"

Thereon he opened the paper with a fillip, and gave himself up to the lecture. But the tall stranger, half rising with a start, exclaimed, —

"Can't you have the manners to be communicative? Do you think nobody cares about Captain Lovett but yourself?"

On this, Dummie turned round on his chair, and, with a "Blow me tight, you 're velcome, I 'm sure," began as follows (we copy the paper, not the diction of the reader): —

"The trial of the notorious Lovett commences this day. Great exertions have been made by people of all classes to procure seats in the Town Hall, which will be full to a degree never before known in this peaceful province. No less than seven indictments are said to await the prisoner; it has been agreed that the robbery of Lord Mauleverer should be the first to come on. The principal witness in this case against the prisoner is understood to be the king's evidence, MacGrawler. No news as yet have been circulated concerning the suspected accomplices, Augustus Tomlinson and Edward Pepper. It is believed that the former has left the country, and that the latter is lurking among the low refuges of guilt with which the heart of the metropolis abounds. Report speaks highly of the person and manners of Lovett. He is also supposed to be a man of some talent, and was formerly engaged in an obscure periodical

edited by MacGrawler, and termed the 'Altenæum,' or 'Asinæum. Nevertheless, we apprehend that his origin is remarkably low, and suitable to the nature of his pursuits. The prisoner will be most fortunate in a judge. Never did any one holding the same high office as Sir William Brandon earn an equal reputation in so short a time. The Whigs are accustomed to sneer at us, when we insist on the *private* virtues of our public men. Let them look to Sir William Brandon, and confess that the austere morals may be linked with the soundest knowledge and the most brilliant genius. The opening address of the learned judge to the jury at — is perhaps the most impressive and solemn piece of eloquence in the English language!"

A cause for this eulogium might haply be found in another part of the paper, in which it was said, —

"Among the higher circles, we understand, the rumour has gone forth that Sir William Brandon is to be recalled to his old parliamentary career in a more elevated scene. So highly are this gentleman's talents respected by his Majesty and the ministers, that they are, it is reported, anxious to secure his assistance in the House of Lords!"

When Dummie had spelt his "toilsome march" through the first of the above extracts he turned round to the tall stranger, and, eying him with a sort of winking significance, said, —

"So MacGrawler peaches, — blows the gaff on his pals, eh! Vel, now, I always suspected that 'ere son of a gun! Do you know, he used to be at the Mug many 's a day, a teaching our little Paul, and says I to Piggy Lob, says I, 'Blow me tight, but that cove is a queer one! and if he does not come to be scragged,' says I, 'it vill only be because he'll turn a rusty, and scrag one of his pals!' So you sees" (here Dummie looked round, and his voice sank into a whisper), — "so you sees, *Meester Pepper*, I vas no fool there!"

Long Ned dropped his pipe, and said sourly and with a suspicious frown, "What! you know me?"

"To be sure and sartin I does," answered little Dummie, walking to the table where the robber sat. "Does not you know I?"

Ned regarded the interrogator with a sullen glance, which gradually brightened into knowledge. "Ah!" said he, with the air of a Brummel, "Mr. Bummie, or Dummie, I think,

eh! Shake a paw, — I'm glad to see you. Recollect the last time I saw you, you rather affronted me. Never mind. I dare say you did not mean it."

Encouraged by this affable reception from the highwayman, though a little embarrassed by Ned's allusion to former conduct on his part, which he felt was just, Dummie grinned, pushed a stool near Ned, sat himself down, and carefully avoiding any immediate answer to Ned's complaints, rejoined, —

"Do you know, Meester Pepper, you struck I all of a heap? I could not have s'posed as how you'd condescend nowadays to come to the Mug, where I never seed you but once afore. Lord love ye, they says as 'ow you go to all the fine places in ruffles, with a pair of silver pops in your vaistcoat pocket! Vy, the boys hereabout say that you and Meester Tomlinson, and this 'ere poor devil in quod, vere the finest gemmen in town; and, Lord, for to think of your ciwility to a pitiful rag-merchant, like I!"

"Ah!" said Ned, gravely, "there are sad principles afloat now. They want to do away with all distinctions in ranks, — to make a duke no better than his valet, and a gentleman highwayman class with a filcher of *fogles*.¹ But, damme, if I don't think misfortune levels us all quite enough; and misfortune brings me here, little Dummie."

"Ah! you wants to keep out of the vay of the bulkies!"

"Right. Since poor Lovett was laid by the heels, which I must say was the fault of his own deuced gentlemanlike behaviour to me and Augustus (you've heard of Guz, you say), the knot of us seems quite broken. One's own friends look inclined to play one false; and really, the queer cuffs hover so sharply upon us that I thought it safe to duck for a time. So I have taken a lodging in a cellar, and I intend for the next three months to board at the Mug. I have heard that I may be sure of lying snug here. Dummie, your health! Give us the baccy."

"I say, Meester Pepper," said Dummie, clearing his throat, when he had obeyed the request, "can you tell I, if so be you

¹ Pickpocket.

'as met in your travels our little Paul? Poor chap! You knows as 'ow and vy he was sent to quod by Justice Burnflat. Vel, ven he got out, he vent to the devil, or summut like it, and ve have not 'eard a vord of him since. You 'members the lad, — a 'nation fine cull, tall and straight as a harrow!"

"Why, you fool," said Ned, "don't you know" — then checking himself suddenly, "Ah! by the by, that rigmarole oath! I was not to tell; though now it's past caring for, I fear! It is no use looking after the seal when the letter's burned."

"Blow me," cried Dunnaker, with unaffected vehemence, "I sees as how you know vot's come of he! Many's the good turn I'll do you, if you vill but tell I."

"Why, does he owe you a dozen bobs; ² or what, Dummie?" said Ned.

"Not he, — not he," cried Dummie.

"What then, you want to do him a mischief of some sort?"

"Do little Paul a mischief!" ejaculated Dummie; "vy, I've known the cull ever since he was *that* high! No, but I wants to do him a great sarvice, Meester Pepper, and myself too, — and you to boot, for aught that I know, Meester Pepper."

"Humph!" said Ned, — "humph! what do you mean? I do, it is true, know where Paul is; but you must tell me first why you wish to know, otherwise you may ask your grandfather for me."

A long, sharp, wistful survey did Mr. Dummie Dunnaker cast around him before he rejoined. All seemed safe and convenient for confidential communication. The supine features of Mrs. Lobkins were hushed in a drowsy stupor; even the gray cat that lay by the fire was curled in the embrace of Morpheus. Nevertheless, it was in a close whisper that Dummie spoke.

"I dares be bound, Meester Pepper, that you 'members vell ven Harry Cook, the great highwayman, — poor fellow! he's gone vhere ve must all go, — brought you, then quite a

² Shillings.

gossoon,¹ for the first time to the little back parlour at the Cock and Hen, Dewereux Court?"

Ned nodded assent.

"And you 'members as how I met Harry and you there, and I vas all afeard at you, — 'cause vy? I had never seen you afore, and ve vas a going to *crack a swell's crib*.² And Harry spoke up for you, and said as 'ow though you had just gone on the town, you was already prime up to gammon. You 'members, eh?"

"Ay, I remember all," said Ned; "it was the first and only house I ever had a hand in breaking into. Harry was a fellow of low habits; so I dropped his acquaintance, and took solely to the road, or a chance ingenuity now and then. I have no idea of a gentleman turning *cracksman*."³

"Vel, so you vent vith us, and ve slipped you through a pane in the kitchen-vindow. You vas the least of us, big as you be now; and you vent round and opened the door for us; and ven you had opened the door, you saw a voman had joined us, and you were a funk'd then, and stayed vithout the *crib*, to keep vatch vhile ve vent in."

"Well, well," cried Ned, "what the devil has all this rigmarole got to do with Paul?"

"Now don't be glimflashy, but let me go on smack right about. Vell, ven ve came out, you minds as 'ow the voman had a bundle in her arms, and you spake to her; and she answered you roughly, and left us all, and vent straight home; and ve vent and *fenced the swag*⁴ that very night and afterwards *napped the regulars*.⁵ And sure you made us laugh 'artily, Meester Pepper, when you said, says you, 'That 'ere voman is a rum blowen.' So she vas, Meester Pepper!"

"Oh, spare me," said Ned, affectedly, "and make haste;

¹ The reader has probably observed the use made by Dummie and Mrs. Lobkins of Irish phraseology or pronunciation. This is a remarkable trait in the dialect of the lowest orders in London, owing, we suppose, to their constant association with emigrants from "the first flower of the earth." Perhaps it is a modish affectation among the gentry of St. Giles's, just as we eke out our mother-tongue with French at Mayfair.

² Break into a gentleman's house.

³ Burglar.

⁴ Sold the booty.

⁵ Took our shares.

you keep me all in the dark. By the way, I remember that you joked me about the bundle; and when I asked what the woman had wrapped in it, you swore it was a child. Rather more likely that the girl, whoever she was, would have left a child behind her than carried one off!" The face of Dummie waxed big with conscious importance.

"Vell, now, you would not believe us; but it vas all true. That 'ere bundle vas the voman's child, — I s'pose an unnatural von by the gemman; she let us into the 'ouse on condition we helped her off with it. And, blow me tight, but ve paid ourselves vel for our trouble. That 'ere voman vas a strange cretur; they say she had been a lord's blowen; but howsomever, she was as 'ot-'eaded and hodd as if she had been. There vas old Nick's hown row made on the matter, and the revard for our [de]tection vas so great, that as you vas not much tried yet, Harry thought it best for to take you vith 'im down to the country, and told you as 'ow it vas all a flam about the child in the bundle!"

"Faith," said Ned, "I believed him readily enough; and poor Harry was twisted shortly after, and I went into Ireland for safety, where I stayed two years, — and deuced good claret I got there!"

"So, vhiles you vas there," continued Dummie, "poor Judy, the voman, died, — she died in this wery 'ouse, and left the horphan to the [af]fection of Piggy Lob, who was 'nation fond of it surely! Oh! but I 'members vot a night it vas ven poor Judy died; the vind vistled like mad, and the rain tumbled about as if it had got a holiday; and there the poor creature lay raving just over 'ed of this room we sits in! Laus-a-me, vat a sight it vas!"

Here Dummie paused, and seemed to recall in imagination the scene he had witnessed; but over the mind of Long Ned a ray of light broke slowly.

"Whew!" said he, lifting up his forefinger, "whew! I smell a rat; this stolen child, then, was no other than Paul. But, pray, to whom did the house belong? For that fact Harry never communicated to me. I only heard the owner was a lawyer, or parson, or *some such thing*."

“Vy now, I’ll tell you, but don’t be glimflashy. So, you see, ven Judy died, and Harry was scragged, I vas the only von living who vas up to the secret; and vhen Mother Lob vas a taking a drop to comfort her vhen Judy vent off, I hopens a great box in which poor Judy kept her duds and rattletraps, and surely I finds at the bottom of the box hever so many letters and sich like, — for I knew as ’ow they vas there; so I whips these off and carries ’em ’ome with me, and soon arter, Mother Lob sold me the box o’ duds for two quids — ’cause vy? I vas a rag-merchant. So now I ’solved, since the secret vas all in my hown keeping, to keep it as tight as vinkey; for first, you sees as ’ow I vas afeard I should be hanged if I vent for to tell, — ’cause vy? I stole a vatch, and lots more, as vell as the hurchin; and next I vas afeard as ’ow the mother might come back and haunt me the same as Sall haunted Villy, for it vas a ’orrid night ven her soul took ving. And hover and above this, Meester Pepper, I thought summut might turn hup by and by, in vchich it vould be best for I to keep my hown counsel and nab the revard, if I hever durst make myself known.”

Here Dummie proceeded to narrate how frightened he had been lest Ned should discover all, when (as it may be remembered, Pepper informed Paul at the beginning of this history) he encountered that worthy at Dame Lobkins’s house; how this fear had induced him to testify to Pepper that coldness and rudeness which had so enraged the haughty highwayman; and how great had been his relief and delight at finding that Ned returned to the Mug no more. He next proceeded to inform his new confidant of his meeting with the father (the sagacious reader knows where and when), and of what took place at that event. He said how, in his first negotiation with the father, prudently resolving to communicate drop by drop such information as he possessed, he merely, besides confessing to a share in the robbery, stated that *he thought* he knew the house, etc., to which the infant had been consigned, — and that, if so, it was still alive; but that he would inquire. He then related how the sanguine father, who saw that hanging Dummie for the robbery of his house might not

be half so likely a method to recover his son as bribery and conciliation, not only forgave him his former outrage, but whetted his appetite to the search by rewarding him for his disclosure. He then proceeded to state how, unable anywhere to find Paul, or any trace of him, he amused the sire from time to time with forged excuses; how, at first, the sums he received made him by no means desirous to expedite a discovery that would terminate such satisfactory receipts; how at length the magnitude of the proffered reward, joined to the threats of the sire, had made him become seriously anxious to learn the real fate and present "whereabout" of Paul; how, the last time he had seen the father, he had, by way of propitiation and first fruit, taken to him all the papers left by the unhappy mother and secreted by himself; and how he was now delighted to find that Ned was acquainted with Paul's address. Since he despaired of finding Paul by his own exertions alone, he became less tenacious of his secret; and he now proffered Ned, on discovery of Paul, a third of that reward the whole of which he had once hoped to engross.

Ned's eyes and mouth opened at this proposition. "But the name, — the name of the father? You have not told me that yet!" cried he, impatiently.

"Noa, noa!" said Dummie, archly, "I does n't tell you all, till you tells I summut. Where's little Paul, I say; and where be us to get at him?"

Ned heaved a sigh.

"As for the oath," said he, musingly, "it would be a sin to keep it, now that to break it can do him no harm, and may do him good, especially as, in case of imprisonment or death, the oath is not held to be binding; yet I fear it is too late for the reward. The father will scarcely thank you for finding his son! — Know, Dummie, that Paul is in — jail, and that he is one and the same person as Captain Lovett!"

Astonishment never wrote in more legible characters than she now displayed on the rough features of Dummie Dumnaker. So strong are the sympathies of a profession compared with all others, that Dummie's first confused thought was *that of pride*. "The great Captain Lovett!" he faltered.

"Little Paul at the top of the profession! Lord, Lord! I always said as how he'd the ambition to rise!"

"Well, well, but the father's name?"

At this question the expression of Dummie's face fell; a sudden horror struggled to his eyes —

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CHAPTER XXXV.

WHY is it that at moments there creeps over us an awe, a terror, overpowering but undefined? Why is it that we shudder without a cause, and feel the warm life-blood stand still in its courses? Are the dead too near?

FALKLAND

Ha! sayest thou! Hideous thought, I feel it twine
O'er my iced heart, as curls around his prey
The sure and deadly serpent!

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What! in the hush and in the solitude
Passed that dread soul away?

Love and Hatred.

THE evening prior to that morning in which the above conversation occurred, Brandon passed alone in his lodging at —. He had felt himself too unwell to attend the customary wassail, and he sat indolently musing in the solitude of the old-fashioned chamber to which he was consigned. There, two wax-candles on the smooth, quaint table dimly struggled against the gloom of heavy panels, which were relieved at unfrequent intervals by portraits in oaken frames, dingy, harsh, and important with the pomp of laced garments and flowing wigs. The predilection of the landlady for modern tastes had, indeed, on each side of the huge fireplace suspended more novel masterpieces of the fine arts. In emblematic gorgeousness hung the pictures of the four Seasons, buxom wenches all, save Winter, who was deformedly bodied forth in the likeness of an aged carle. These were inter-

persed by an engraving of Lord Mauleverer, the lieutenant of the neighbouring county, looking extremely majestic in his peer's robes; and by three typifications of Faith, Hope, and Charity, — ladies with whom it may be doubted if the gay earl ever before cultivated so close an intimacy. Curtains, of that antique chintz in which fascies of stripes are alternated by rows of flowers, filled the interstices of three windows; a heavy sideboard occupied the greater portion of one side of the room; and on the opposite side, in the rear of Brandon, a vast screen stretched its slow length along, and relieved the unpopulated and as it were desolate comfort of the apartment.

Pale and imperfectly streamed the light upon Brandon's face, as he sat in his large chair, leaning his cheek on one hand, and gazing with the unconscious earnestness of abstraction on the clear fire. At that moment a whole phalanx of gloomy thought was sweeping in successive array across his mind. His early ambition, his ill-omened marriage, the causes of his after-rise in the wrong-judging world, the first dawn of his reputation, his rapid and flattering successes, his present elevation, his aspiring hope of far higher office, and more patrician honours, — all these phantoms passed before him in checkered shadow and light; but ever with each stalked one disquieting and dark remembrance, — the loss of his only son.

Weaving his ambition with the wish to revive the pride of his hereditary name, every acquisition of fortune or of fame rendered him yet more anxious to find the only one who could perpetuate these hollow distinctions to his race.

"I shall recover him yet!" he broke out suddenly and aloud. As he spoke, a quick, darting, spasmodic pain ran shivering through his whole frame, and then fixed for one instant on his heart with a gripe like the talons of a bird; it passed away, and was followed by a deadly sickness. Brandon rose, and filling himself a large tumbler of water, drank with avidity. The sickness passed off like the preceding pain; but the sensation had of late been often felt by Brandon, and disregarded, — for few persons were less afflicted with

the self-torture of hypochondria; but now, that night, whether it was more keen than usual, or whether his thought had touched on the string that jars naturally on the most startling of human anticipations, we know not, but, as he resumed his seat, the idea of his approaching dissolution shot like an ice-bolt through his breast.

So intent was this scheming man upon the living objects of the world, and so little were his thoughts accustomed to turn toward the ultimate goal of all things, that this idea obtruding itself abruptly upon him, startled him with a ghastly awe. He *felt* the colour rush from his cheek, and a tingling and involuntary pain ran wandering through the channels of his blood, even from the roots of the hair to the soles of his feet. But the stern soul of Brandon was not one which shadows could long affright. He nerved himself to meet the grim thought thus forced upon his mental eye, and he gazed on it with a steady and enduring look.

"Well," thought he, "is my hour coming, or have I yet the ordinary term of mortal nature to expect? It is true, I have lately suffered these strange revulsions of the frame with somewhat of an alarming frequency; perhaps this medicine, which healed the anguish of one infirmity, has produced another more immediately deadly. Yet why should I think this? My sleep is sound and calm, my habits temperate, my mind active and clear as in its best days. In my youth I never played the traitor with my constitution; why should it desert me at the very threshold of my age? Nay, nay, these are but passing twitches, chills of the blood that begins to wax thin. Shall I learn to be less rigorous in my diet? Perhaps wine may reward my abstinence in avoiding it for my luxuries, by becoming a cordial to my necessities! Ay, I will consult, — I will consult, I must not die yet. I have — let me see, three — four grades to gain before the ladder is scaled. And, above all, I must regain my child! Lucy married to Mauleverer, myself a peer, my son wedded to — whom? Pray God he be not married already! My nephews and my children nobles! the house of Brandon restored, my power high in the upward gaze of men, my fame set on a more lasting

basis than a skill in the quirks of law, — these are *yet to* come; these I will *not* die till I have enjoyed! Men die not till their destinies are fulfilled. The spirit that swells and soars within me says that the destiny of William Brandon is but half begun!”

With this conclusion, Brandon sought his pillow. What were the reflections of the prisoner whom he was to judge? Need we ask? Let us picture to ourselves his shattered health, the languor of sickness heightening the gloom which makes the very air of a jail; his certainty of the doom to be passed against him; his knowledge that the uncle of Lucy Brandon was to be his judge, that Mauleverer was to be his accuser, and that in all human probability the only woman he had ever loved must sooner or later learn the criminality of his life and the ignominy of his death; let us but glance at the above blackness of circumstances that surrounded him, and it would seem that there is but little doubt as to the complexion of his thoughts! Perhaps, indeed, even in that terrible and desolate hour one sweet face shone on him, “and dashed the darkness all away.” Perhaps, too, whatever might be the stings of his conscience, one thought, one remembrance of a temptation mastered and a sin escaped, brought to his eyes tears that were sweet and healing in their source. But the heart of a man in Clifford’s awful situation is dark and inscrutable; and often when the wildest and gloomiest external circumstances surround us, their reflection sleeps like a shadow, calm and still upon the mind.

The next morning, the whole town of — (a town in which, we regret to say, an accident once detained ourself for three wretched days, and which we can, speaking therefore from profound experience, assert to be in ordinary times the most melancholy and peopleless-looking congregation of houses that a sober imagination can conceive) exhibited a scene of such bustle, animation, and jovial anxiety as the trial for life or death to a fellow-creature can alone excite in the phlegmatic breasts of the English. Around the court the crowd thickened with every moment, until the whole market-place in which the townhall was situated became one living

mass. The windows of the houses were filled with women, some of whom had taken that opportunity to make parties to breakfast; and little round tables, with tea and toast on them, caught the eyes of the grinning mobbists as they gaped impatiently upwards.

"Ben," said a stout yeoman, tossing up a halfpenny, and catching the said coin in his right hand, which he immediately covered with the left, — "Ben, heads or tails that Lovett is hanged; heads hanged, tails not, for a crown."

"Petticoats, to be sure," quoth Ben, eating an apple; and it was heads!

"Damme, you've lost!" cried the yeoman, rubbing his rough hands with glee.

It would have been a fine sight for Asmodeus, could he have perched on one of the house tops of the market-place of —, and looked on the murmuring and heaving sea of mortality below. Oh! the sight of a crowd round a court of law or a gibbet ought to make the devil split himself with laughter.

While the mob was fretting, and pushing, and swearing, and grinning, and betting, and picking pockets, and trampling feet, and tearing gowns, and scrambling nearer and nearer to the doors and windows of the court, Brandon was slowly concluding his abstemious repast, preparatory to attendance on his judicial duties. His footman entered with a letter. Sir William glanced rapidly over the seal (one of those immense sacrifices of wax used at that day), adorned with a huge coat-of-arms, surmounted with an earl's coronet, and decorated on either side with those supporters so dear to heraldic taste. He then tore open the letter, and read as follows: —

MY DEAR SIR WILLIAM, — You know that in the last conversation I had the honour to hold with you I alluded, though perhaps somewhat distantly, to the esteem which his Majesty had personally expressed for your principles and talents, and his wish to testify it at the earliest opportunity. There will be, as you are doubtless aware, an immediate creation of four peerages. Your name stands second on the list. The choice of title his Majesty graciously leaves to you; but he has hinted that the respectable antiquity of your family would make him best

pleased were you to select the name of your own family-seat, which, if I mistake not, is Warlock. You will instruct me at your leisure as to the manner in which the patent should be made out, touching the succession, etc. Perhaps (excuse the license of an old friend) this event may induce you to forsake your long-cherished celibacy. I need not add that this accession of rank will be accompanied by professional elevation. You will see by the papers that the death of —— leaves vacant the dignity of Chief Baron; and I am at length empowered to offer you a station proportioned to your character and talents.

With great consideration, believe me, my dear Sir,

Very truly yours,

Private and Confidential.

Brandon's dark eye glanced quickly from the signature of the premier, affixed to this communication, towards the mirror opposite him. He strode to it, and examined his own countenance with a long and wistful gaze. Never, we think, did youthful gallant about to repair to the trysting-spot, in which fair looks make the greatest of earthly advantages, gaze more anxiously on the impartial glass than now did the ascetic and scornful judge; and never, we ween, did the eye of the said gallant retire with a more satisfied and triumphant expression.

"Yes, yes!" muttered the judge, "no sign of infirmity is yet written *here*; the blood flows clear and warm enough; the cheek looks firm too, and passing full, for one who was always of the lean kine. Aha! this letter is a cordial, an *elixir vitæ*. I feel as if a new lease were granted to the reluctant tenant. Lord Warlock, the first Baron of Warlock, Lord Chief Baron, — what next?"

As he spoke, he strode unconsciously away, folding his arms with that sort of joyous and complacent gesture which implies the idea of a man hugging himself in a silent delight. Assuredly had the most skilful physician then looked upon the ardent and all-lighted face, the firm step, the elastic and muscular frame, the vigorous air of Brandon, as he mentally continued his soliloquy, he would have predicted for him as fair a grasp on longevity as the chances of mortal life will allow. He was interrupted by the servant entering.

"It is twenty-five minutes after nine, sir," said he, respectfully.

"Sir, — *sir!*" repeated Brandon. "Ah, well! so late!"

"Yes, sir, and the sheriff's carriage is almost at the door."

"Humph! Minister, — Peer, — Warlock, — succession. My son, my son! would to God that I could find thee!"

Such were Brandon's last thoughts as he left the room. It was with great difficulty, so dense was the crowd, that the judge drove up to the court. As the carriage slowly passed, the spectators pressed to the windows of the vehicle, and stood on tiptoe to catch a view of the celebrated lawyer. Brandon's face, never long indicative of his feelings, had now settled into its usual gravity; and the severe loftiness of his look chilled, while it satisfied, the curiosity of the vulgar. It had been ordered that no person should be admitted until the judge had taken his seat on the bench; and this order occasioned so much delay, owing to the accumulated pressure of the vast and miscellaneous group, that it was more than half an hour before the court was able to obtain that decent order suiting the solemnity of the occasion. At five minutes before ten a universal and indescribable movement announced that the prisoner was put to the bar. We read in one of the journals of that day, that "on being put to the bar, the prisoner looked round with a long and anxious gaze, which at length settled on the judge, and then dropped, while the prisoner was observed to change countenance slightly. Lovett was dressed in a plain dark suit; he seemed to be about six feet high; and though thin and worn, probably from the effect of his wound and imprisonment, he is remarkably well made, and exhibits the outward appearance of that great personal strength which he is said to possess, and which is not unfrequently the characteristic of daring criminals. His face is handsome and prepossessing, his eyes and hair dark, and his complexion pale, possibly from the effects of his confinement; there was a certain sternness in his countenance during the greater part of the trial. His behaviour was remarkably collected and composed. The prisoner listened with the greatest attention to the indictment,

which the reader will find in another part of our paper, charging him with the highway robbery of Lord Mauleverer, on the night of the — of — last. He occasionally inclined his body forward, and turned his ear towards the court; and he was observed, as the jury were sworn, to look steadily in the face of each. He breathed thick and hard when the various aliases he had assumed — Howard, Cavendish, Jackson, etc., — were read; but smiled with an unaccountable expression when the list was completed, as if exulting at the varieties of his ingenuity. At twenty-five minutes past ten Mr. Dyebright, the counsel for the crown, stated the case to the jury."

Mr. Dyebright was a lawyer of great eminence; he had been a Whig all his life, but had latterly become remarkable for his insincerity, and subservience to the wishes of the higher powers. His talents were peculiar and effective. If he had little eloquence, he had much power; and his legal knowledge was sound and extensive. Many of his brethren excelled him in display; but no one, like him, possessed the secret of addressing a jury. Winningly familiar; seemingly candid to a degree that scarcely did justice to his cause, as if he were in an agony lest he should persuade you to lean a hair-breadth more on his side of the case than justice would allow; apparently all made up of good, homely, virtuous feeling, a disinterested regard for truth, a blunt yet tender honesty, seasoned with a few amiable fireside prejudices, which always come home to the hearts of your fathers of families and thorough-bred Britons; versed in all the niceties of language, and the magic of names; if he were defending crime, carefully calling it misfortune; if attacking misfortune, constantly calling it crime, — Mr. Dyebright was exactly the man born to pervert justice, to tickle jurors, to cozen truth with a friendly smile, and to obtain a vast reputation as an excellent advocate. He began with a long preliminary flourish on the importance of the case. He said that he should with the most scrupulous delicacy avoid every remark calculated to raise unnecessary prejudice against the prisoner. He should not allude to his unhappy notoriety, his associations

with the lowest dregs. (Here up jumped the counsel for the prisoner, and Mr. Dyebright was called to order.) "God knows," resumed the learned gentleman, looking wistfully at the jury, "that my learned friend might have spared himself this warning. God knows that I would rather fifty of the wretched inmates of this county jail were to escape unharmed than that a hair of the prisoner you behold at the bar should be unjustly touched. The life of a human being is at stake; we should be guilty ourselves of a crime which on our deathbeds we should tremble to recall, were we to suffer any consideration, whether of interest or of prejudice, or of undue fear for our own properties and lives, to bias us even to the turning of a straw against the unfortunate prisoner. Gentlemen, if you find me travelling a single inch from my case, — if you find me saying a single word calculated to harm the prisoner in your eyes, and unsupported by the evidence I shall call, — then I implore you not to depend upon the vigilance of my learned friend, but to treasure these *my* errors in your recollection, and to consider them as so many arguments in favour of the prisoner. If, gentlemen, I *could* by any possibility imagine that your verdict would be favourable to the prisoner, I can, unaffectedly and from the bottom of my heart, declare to you that I should rejoice; a case might be lost, but a fellow-creature would be saved! Callous as we of the legal profession are believed, we have feelings like you; and I ask any one of you, gentlemen of the jury, any one who has ever felt the pleasures of social intercourse, the joy of charity, the heart's reward of benevolence, — I ask any one of you, whether, if he were placed in the arduous situation I now hold, all the persuasions of vanity would not vanish at once from his mind, and whether his defeat as an advocate would not be rendered dear to him by the common and fleshly sympathies of a man. But, gentlemen" (Mr. Dyebright's voice at once deepened and faltered), "there is a duty, a painful duty, we owe to our country; and never, in the long course of my professional experience, do I remember an instance in which it was more called forth than in the present. Mercy, gentlemen, is dear, very dear to us all; but

it is the deadliest injury we can inflict on mankind when it is bought at the expense of justice."

The learned gentleman then, after a few further prefatory observations, proceeded to state how, on the night of — last, Lord Mauleverer was stopped and robbed by three men masked, of a sum of money amounting to above £350, a diamond snuff-box, rings, watch, and a case of most valuable jewels, — how Lord Mauleverer, in endeavouring to defend himself, had passed a bullet through the clothes of one of the robbers, — how it would be proved that the garments of the prisoner, found in a cave in Oxfordshire, and positively sworn to by a witness he should produce, exhibited a rent similar to such a one as a bullet would produce, — how, moreover, it would be positively sworn to by the same witness, that the prisoner Lovett had come to the cavern with two accomplices not since taken up, since their rescue by the prisoner, and boasted of the robbery he had just committed; that in the clothes and sleeping apartment of the robber the articles stolen from Lord Mauleverer were found; and that the purse containing the notes for £300, the only thing the prisoner could probably have obtained time to carry off with him, on the morning on which the cave was entered by the policemen, was found on his person on the day on which he had attempted the rescue of his comrades, and had been apprehended in that attempt. He stated, moreover, that the dress found in the cavern, and sworn to by one witness he should produce as belonging to the prisoner, answered exactly to the description of the clothes worn by the principal robber, and sworn to by Lord Mauleverer, his servant, and the postilions. In like manner the colour of one of the horses found in the cavern corresponded with that rode by the highwayman. On these circumstantial proofs, aided by the immediate testimony of the king's evidence (that witness whom he should produce) he rested a case which could, he averred, leave no doubt on the minds of an impartial jury. Such, briefly and plainly alleged, made the substance of the details entered into by the learned counsel, who then proceeded to call his witnesses. The evidence of Lord Mauleverer (who was staying at Mauleverer

Park, which was within a few miles of —) was short and clear (it was noticed as a singular circumstance, that at the end of the evidence the prisoner bowed respectfully to his lordship). The witness of the postilions and of the valet was no less concise; nor could all the ingenuity of Clifford's counsel shake any part of their evidence in his cross-examination. The main witness depended on by the crown was now summoned, and the solemn countenance of Peter MacGrawler rose on the eyes of the jury. One look of cold and blighting contempt fell on him from the eye of the prisoner, who did not again deign to regard him during the whole of his examination.

The witness of MacGrawler was delivered with a pomposity worthy of the ex-editor of the "Asinæum." Nevertheless, by the skill of Mr. Dyebright, it was rendered sufficiently clear a story to leave an impression on the jury damnatory to the interests of the prisoner. The counsel on the opposite side was not slow in perceiving the ground acquired by the adverse party; so, clearing his throat, he rose with a sneering air to the cross-examination.

"So, so," began Mr. Botheram, putting on a pair of remarkably large spectacles, wherewith he truculently regarded the witness, — "so, so, Mr. MacGrawler, — is that your name, eh, eh? Ah, it is, is it? A very respectable name it is too, I warrant. Well, sir, look at me. Now, on your oath, remember, were you ever the editor of a certain thing published every Wednesday, and called the 'Altenæum,' or the 'Asinæum,' or some such name?"

Commencing with this insidious and self-damnatory question, the learned counsel then proceeded, as artfully as he was able, through a series of interrogatories calculated to injure the character, the respectable character, of MacGrawler, and weaken his testimony in the eyes of the jury. He succeeded in exciting in the audience that feeling of merriment wherewith the vulgar are always so delighted to intersperse the dull seriousness of hanging a human being. But though the jury themselves grinned, they were not convinced. The Scotsman retired from the witness-box "scotched," perhaps, in reputa-

tion, but not "killed" as to testimony. It was just before this witness concluded, that Lord Mauleverer caused to be handed to the judge a small slip of paper, containing merely these words in pencil:—

DEAR BRANDON, — A dinner waits you at Mauleverer Park, only three miles hence. Lord — and the Bishop of — meet you. Plenty of news from London, and a letter about you, which I will show to no one till we meet. Make haste and hang this poor fellow, that I may see you the sooner; and it is bad for both of us to wait long for a regular meal like dinner. I can't stay longer, it is so hot, and my nerves were always susceptible.

Yours,

MAULEVERER.

If you will come, give me a nod. You know my hour, — it is always the same.

The judge, glancing over the note, inclined his head gravely to the earl, who withdrew; and in one minute afterwards, a heavy and breathless silence fell over the whole court. The prisoner was called upon for his defence: it was singular what a different sensation to that existing in their breasts the moment before crept thrillingly through the audience. Hushed was every whisper, vanished was every smile that the late cross-examination had excited; a sudden and chilling sense of the dread importance of the tribunal made itself abruptly felt in the minds of every one present.

Perhaps, as in the gloomy satire of Hogarth (the moral Mephistopheles of painters), the close neighbourhood of pain to mirth made the former come with the homelier shock to the heart; be that as it may, a freezing anxiety, numbing the pulse and stirring through the air, made every man in that various crowd feel a sympathy of awe with his neighbour, excepting only the hardened judge and the hackneyed lawyers, and one spectator, — an idiot who had thrust himself in with the general press, and stood, within a few paces of the prisoner, grinning unconsciously, and every now and then winking with a glassy eye at some one at a distance, whose vigilance he had probably eluded.

The face and aspect, even the attitude, of the prisoner were

well fitted to heighten the effect which would naturally have been created by any man under the same fearful doom. He stood at the very front of the bar, and his tall and noble figure was drawn up to its full height; a glow of excitement spread itself gradually over features at all times striking, and lighted an eye naturally eloquent, and to which various emotions at that time gave a more than commonly deep and impressive expression. He began thus:—

“My lord, I have little to say, and I may at once relieve the anxiety of my counsel, who now looks wistfully upon me, and add that that little will scarcely embrace the object of defence. Why should I defend myself? Why should I endeavour to protract a life that a few days, more or less, will terminate, according to the ordinary calculations of chance? Such as it is and has been, my life is vowed to the law, and the law will have the offering. Could I escape from this indictment, I know that seven others await me, and that by one or the other of these my conviction and my sentence must come. Life may be sweet to all of us, my lord; and were it possible that mine could be spared yet a while, that continued life might make a better atonement for past actions than a death which, abrupt and premature, calls for repentance while it forbids redress.

“But when the dark side of things is our only choice, it is useless to regard the bright; idle to fix our eyes upon life, when death is at hand; useless to speak of contrition, when we are denied its proof. It is the usual policy of prisoners in my situation to address the feelings and flatter the prejudices of the jury; to descant on the excellence of our laws, while they endeavour to disarm them; to praise justice, yet demand mercy; to talk of expecting acquittal, yet boast of submitting without a murmur to condemnation. For me, to whom all earthly interests are dead, this policy is idle and superfluous. I hesitate not to tell you, my lord judge,—to proclaim to you, gentlemen of the jury,—that the laws which I have broken through my life I despise in death! Your laws are but of two classes; the one makes criminals, the other punishes them. I have suffered by the one; I am about to perish by the other.

“My lord, it was the turn of a straw which made me what I am. Seven years ago I was sent to the house of correction for an offence which I did not commit. I went thither, a boy who had never infringed a single law; I came forth, in a few weeks, a man who was prepared to break all laws! Whence was this change? Was it my fault, or that of my condemners? You had first wronged me by a punishment which I did not deserve; you wronged me yet more deeply when (even had I been guilty of the first offence) I was sentenced to herd with hardened offenders, and graduates in vice and vice’s methods of support. The laws themselves caused me to break the laws: first, by implanting within me the goading sense of injustice; secondly, by submitting me to the corruption of example. Thus, I repeat, — and I trust my words will sink solemnly into the hearts of all present, — your legislation made me what I am; and it now *destroys me, as it has destroyed thousands, for being what it made me!* But for this, the first aggression on me, I might have been what the world terms honest, — I might have advanced to old age and a peaceful grave through the harmless cheateries of trade or the honoured falsehoods of a profession. Nay, I might have supported the laws which I have now braved; like the counsel opposed to me, I might have grown sleek on the vices of others, and advanced to honour by my ingenuity in hanging my fellow-creatures! The canting and prejudging part of the Press has affected to set before you the merits of ‘honest ability,’ or ‘laborious trade,’ in opposition to my offences. What, I beseech you, are the props of your ‘honest’ exertion, — the profits of ‘trade’? Are there no bribes to menials? Is there no adulteration of goods? Are the rich never duped in the price they pay? Are the poor never wronged in the quality they receive? Is there honesty in the bread you eat, in a single necessity which clothes or feeds or warms you? Let those whom the law protects consider it a protector: when did it ever protect *me*? When did it ever protect the poor man? The government of a State, the institutions of law, profess to provide for all those who ‘obey.’ Mark! a man hungers, — do you feed him? He is naked, — do you clothe him?

If not, you break your covenant, you drive him back to the first law of nature, and you hang him, not because he is guilty, but because you have *left* him naked and starving! [A murmur among the mob below, with great difficulty silenced.] One thing only I will add, and that not to move your mercy, — no, nor to invest my fate with an idle and momentary interest, — but because there are some persons in this world who have not known me as the criminal who stands before you, and whom the tidings of my fate may hereafter reach; and I would not have those persons view me in blacker colours than I deserve. Among all the rumours, gentlemen, that have reached you, through all the tales and fables kindled from my unhappy notoriety and my approaching doom, I put it to you, if you have heard that I have committed one sanguinary action or one ruinous and deliberate fraud. You have heard that I have lived by the plunder of the rich, — I do not deny the charge. From the grinding of the poor, the habitual overreaching, or the systematic pilfering of my neighbours, my conscience is as free as it is from the charge of cruelty and bloodshed. Those *errors* I leave to honest mediocrity or virtuous exertion! You may perhaps find, too, that my life has not passed through a career of outrage without scattering some few benefits on the road. In destroying me, it is true that you will have the consolation to think that among the benefits you derive from my sentence will be the salutary encouragement you give to other offenders to offend to the *last* degree, and to divest outrage of no single aggravation! But if this does not seem to you any very powerful inducement, you may pause before you cut off from all amendment a man who seems neither wholly hardened nor utterly beyond atonement. My lord, my counsel would have wished to summon witnesses, — some to bear testimony to redeeming points in my own character, others to invalidate the oath of the witness against me, — a man whom I saved from destruction in order that he might destroy me. I do not think either necessary. The public Press has already said of me what little good does not shock the truth; and had I not possessed something of those qualities which society does not disesteem, you

would not have beheld me here at this hour! If I had saved myself as well as my companions, I should have left this country, perhaps forever, and commenced a very different career abroad. I committed offences; I eluded you; I committed what, in my case, was an act of duty: I am seized, and I perish. But the weakness of my body destroys me, not the strength of your malice. Had I" (and as the prisoner spake, the haughty and rapid motion, the *enlarging of the form*, produced by the passion of the moment, made impressively conspicuous to all the remarkable power of his frame), — "had I but my wonted health, my wonted command over these limbs and these veins, I would have asked no friend, no ally, to favour my escape. I tell you, engines and guardians of the law, that I would have mocked your chains and defied your walls, as ye know that I have mocked and defied them before. But my blood creeps now only in drops through its courses; and the heart that I had of old stirs feebly and heavily within me." The prisoner paused a moment, and resumed in an altered tone: "Leaving, then, my own character to the ordeal of report, I cannot perhaps do better than leave to the same criterion that of the witness against me. I will candidly own that under other circumstances it might have been otherwise. I will candidly avow that I might have then used such means as your law awards me to procure an acquittal and to prolong my existence, — though in a new scene; as it is, what matters the cause in which I receive my sentence? Nay, it is even better to suffer by the first than to linger to the last. It is some consolation not again to stand where I now stand; to go through the humbling solemnities which I have this day endured; to see the smile of some, and retort the frown of others; to wrestle with the anxiety of the heart, and to depend on the caprice of the excited nerves. It is something to feel one part of the drama of disgrace is over, and that I may wait unmolested in my den until, for one time only, I am again the butt of the unthinking and the monster of the crowd. My lord, I have now done! To you, whom the law deems the prisoner's counsel, — to you, gentlemen of the jury, to whom it has delegated his fate, — I leave the chances of my life."

The prisoner ceased; but the same heavy silence which, save when broken by one solitary murmur, had lain over the court during his speech, still continued even for several moments after that deep and firm voice had died on the ear. So different had been the defence of the prisoner from that which had been expected; so assuredly did the more hackneyed part of the audience, even as he had proceeded, imagine that by some artful turn he would at length wind into the usual courses of defence, — that when his unfaltering and almost stern accents paused, men were not prepared to feel that his speech was finished, and the pause involuntarily jarred on them as untimely and abrupt. At length, when each of the audience slowly awoke to the conviction that the prisoner had indeed concluded his harangue, a movement, eloquent of feelings released from a suspense, which had been perhaps the more earnest and the more blended with awe, from the boldness and novelty of the words on which it hung, circled round the court. The jurors looked confusedly at each other, but not one of them spoke, even by a whisper; their feelings, which had been aroused by the speech of the prisoner, had not from its shortness, its singularity, and the haughty impolicy of its tone, been so far guided by its course as to settle into any state of mind clearly favourable to him, or the reverse; so that each man waited for his neighbour to speak first, in order that he might find, as it were, in another, a kind of clew to the indistinct and excited feelings which wanted utterance in himself.

The judge, who had been from the first attracted by the air and aspect of the prisoner, had perhaps, notwithstanding the hardness of his mind, more approvingly than any one present listened to the defence; for in the scorn of the hollow institutions and the mock honesty of social life, so defyingly manifested by the prisoner, Brandon recognized elements of mind remarkably congenial to his own; and this sympathy was heightened by the hardihood of physical nerve and moral intrepidity displayed by the prisoner, — qualities which among men of a similar mould often form the strongest motive of esteem, and sometimes (as we read of in the Imperial Cor-

sican and his chiefs) the *only* point of attraction! Brandon was, however, soon recalled to his cold self by a murmur of vague applause circling throughout the common crowd, among whom the general impulse always manifests itself first, and to whom the opinions of the prisoner, though but imperfectly understood, came more immediately home than they did to the better and richer classes of the audience. Ever alive to the decorums of form, Brandon instantly ordered silence in the court; and when it was again restored, and it was fully understood that the prisoner's defence had closed, the judge proceeded to sum up.

It is worthy of remark that many of the qualities of mind which seem most unamiable in private life often conduce with a singular felicity to the ends of public; and thus the stony firmness characteristic of Brandon was a main cause which made him admirable as a judge, — for men in office err no less from their feelings than their interests.

Glancing over his notes, the judge inclined himself to the jury, and began with that silver ringing voice which particularly distinguished Brandon's eloquence, and carried with it in high stations so majestic and candid a tone of persuasion. He pointed out, with a clear brevity, the various points of the evidence; he dwelt for a moment on the attempt to cast disrepute upon the testimony of MacGrawler, but called a proper attention to the fact that the attempt had been unsupported by witnesses or proof. As he proceeded, the impression made by the prisoner on the minds of the jury slowly melted away; and perhaps, so much do men soften when they behold clearly the face of a fellow-man dependent on them for life, it acted disadvantageously on the interests of Clifford, that during the summing up he leaned back in the dock, and prevented his countenance from being seen. When the evidence had been gone through, the judge concluded thus:—

“The prisoner, who in his defence (on the principles and opinions of which I now forbear to comment) certainly exhibited the signs of a superior education, and a high though perverted ability, has alluded to the reports circulated by the public Press, and leaned some little stress on the various

anecdotes tending to his advantage, which he supposes have reached your ears. I am by no means willing that the prisoner should be deprived of whatever benefit may be derivable from such a source; but it is not in this place, nor at this moment, that it can avail him. All you have to consider is the evidence before you. All on which you have to decide is, whether the prisoner be or be not guilty of the robbery of which he is charged. You must not waste a thought on what redeems or heightens a supposed crime, — you must only decide on the crime itself. Put away from your minds, I beseech you, all that interferes with the main case. Put away also from your motives of decision all forethought of other possible indictments to which the prisoner has alluded, but with which you are necessarily unacquainted. If you doubt the evidence, whether of one witness or of all, the prisoner must receive from you the benefit of that doubt. If not, you are sworn to a solemn oath, which ordains you to forego all minor considerations, — which compels you to watch narrowly that you be not influenced by the infirmities natural to us all, but criminal in you, to lean towards the side of a mercy that would be rendered by your oath a perjury to God, and by your duty as impartial citizens a treason to your country. I dismiss you to the grave consideration of the important case you have heard; and I trust that He to whom all hearts are open and all secrets are known, will grant you the temper and the judgment to form a right decision!"

There was in the majestic aspect and thrilling voice of Brandon something which made the commonest form of words solemn and impressive; and the hypocrite, aware of this felicity of manner, generally, as now, added weight to his concluding words by a religious allusion or a Scriptural phraseology. He ceased; and the jury, recovering the effect of his adjuration, consulted for a moment among themselves. The foreman then, addressing the court on behalf of his fellow-jurors, requested leave to retire for deliberation. An attendant bailiff being sworn in, we read in the journals of the day, which noted the divisions of time with that customary scrupulosity rendered terrible by the reflection how soon all time and sea-

sons may perish for the hero of the scene, that "it was at twenty-five minutes to two that the jury withdrew."

Perhaps in the whole course of a criminal trial there is no period more awful than that occupied by the deliberation of the jury. In the present case the prisoner, as if acutely sensible of his situation, remained in the rear of the dock, and buried his face in his hands. They who stood near him observed, however, that his breast did not seem to swell with the convulsive emotion customary to persons in his state, and that not even a sigh or agitated movement escaped him. The jury had been absent about twenty minutes, when a confused noise was heard in the court. The face of the judge turned in commanding severity towards the quarter whence it proceeded. He perceived a man of a coarse garb and mean appearance endeavouring rudely and violently to push his way through the crowd towards the bench, and at the same instant he saw one of the officers of the court approaching the disturber of its tranquillity with no friendly intent. The man, aware of the purpose of the constable, exclaimed with great vehemence, "I vill give this to my lord the judge, blow me if I von't!" and as he spoke he raised high above his head a soiled scrap of paper folded awkwardly in the shape of a letter. The instant Brandon's eye caught the rugged features of the intrusive stranger, he motioned with rather less than his usual slowness of gesture to one of his official satellites. "Bring me that paper instantly!" he whispered.

The officer bowed and obeyed. The man, who seemed a little intoxicated, gave it with a look of ludicrous triumph and self-importance.

"Stand away, man!" he added to the constable, who now laid hand on his collar. "You'll see vot the judge says to that 'ere bit of paper; and so vill the prisoner, poor fellow!"

This scene, so unworthy the dignity of the court, attracted the notice and (immediately around the intruder) the merriment of the crowd; and many an eye was directed towards Brandon, as with calm gravity he opened the note and glanced over the contents. In a large school-boy hand—it was the hand of Long Ned—were written these few words;—

MY LORD JUDGE, — I make bold to beg you will do all you can for the prisoner at the barre, as he is no other than the "Paul" I spoke to your Worship about. You know what I mean.

DUMMIE DUNNAKER.

As he read this note, the judge's head was observed to droop suddenly, as if by a sickness or a spasm; but he recovered himself instantly, and whispering the officer who brought him the note, said, "See that that madman be immediately removed from the court, and lock him up *alone*. He is so deranged as to be dangerous!"

The officer lost not a moment in seeing the order executed. Three stout constables dragged the astounded Dummie from the court in an instant, yet the more ruthlessly for his ejaculating, —

"Eh, sirs, what's this? I tells you I have saved the judge's hown flesh and blood! Vy, now, gently, there; you'll smart for this, my fine fellow! Never you mind, Paul, my 'arty; I'se done you a pure good —"

"Silence!" proclaimed the voice of the judge; and that voice came forth with so commanding a tone of power that it awed Dummie, despite his intoxication. In a moment more, and ere he had time to recover, he was without the court. During this strange hubbub, which nevertheless scarcely lasted above two or three minutes, the prisoner had not once lifted his head, nor appeared aroused in any manner from his revery; and scarcely had the intruder been withdrawn before the jury returned.

The verdict was, as all had foreseen, "Guilty;" but it was coupled with a strong recommendation to mercy.

The prisoner was then asked, in the usual form, whether he had to say anything why sentence of death should not be passed against him.

As these dread words struck upon his ear, slowly the prisoner rose. He directed first towards the jury a brief and keen glance, and his eyes then rested full, and with a stern significance, on the face of his judge.

"My lord," he began, "I have but one reason to advance against the sentence of the law. If you have interest to pre-

vent or mitigate it, that reason will, I think, suffice to enlist you on my behalf. I said that the first cause of those offences against the law which brings me to this bar was the committing me to prison on a charge of which I was wholly innocent! My lord judge, *you* were the man who accused me of that charge, and subjected me to that imprisonment! Look at me well, my lord, and you may trace in the countenance of the hardened felon you are about to adjudge to death the features of a boy whom, some seven years ago, you accused before a London magistrate of the theft of your watch. On the oath of a man who has one step on the threshold of death, the accusation was unjust. And, fit minister of the laws you represent! you, who will now pass my doom, — *you* were the cause of my crimes! My lord, I have done. I am ready to add another to the long and dark list of victims who are first polluted and then sacrificed by the blindness and the injustice of human codes!"

While Clifford spoke, every eye turned from him to the judge, and every one was appalled by the ghastly and fearful change which had fallen over Brandon's face. Men said, afterwards, that they saw written there, in terrible distinctness, the characters of death; and there certainly seemed something awful and preternatural in the bloodless and haggard calmness of his proud features. Yet his eye did not quail, nor the muscles of his lip quiver; and with even more than his wonted loftiness, he met the regard of the prisoner. But, as alone conspicuous throughout the motionless and breathless crowd the judge and criminal gazed upon each other, and as the eyes of the spectators wandered on each, a thrilling and electric impression of a powerful likeness between the doomed and the doomer, for the first time in the trial, struck upon the audience, and increased, though they scarcely knew why, the sensation of pain and dread which the prisoner's last words excited. Perhaps it might have chiefly arisen from a common expression of fierce emotion conquered by an iron and stern character of mind; or perhaps, now that the ashy paleness of exhaustion had succeeded the excited flush on the prisoner's face, the similarity of com-

plexion thus obtained made the likeness more obvious than before; or perhaps the spectators had not hitherto fixed so searching, or, if we may so speak, so alternating a gaze upon the two. However that be, the resemblance between the men, placed as they were in such widely different circumstances, — that resemblance which, as we have hinted, had at certain moments occurred startlingly to Lucy, — was plain and unavoidably striking: the same the dark hue of their complexions; the same the haughty and Roman outline of their faces; the same the height of the forehead; the same even a displeasing and sarcastic rigidity of mouth, which made the most conspicuous feature in Brandon, and which was the only point that deteriorated from the singular beauty of Clifford. But, above all, the same inflexible, defying, stubborn spirit, though in Brandon it assumed the stately cast of majesty, and in Clifford it seemed the desperate sternness of the bravo, stamped itself in both. Though Clifford ceased, he did not resume his seat, but stood in the same attitude as that in which he had reversed the order of things, and merged the petitioner in the accuser; and Brandon himself, without speaking or moving, continued still to survey him; so, with erect fronts and marble countenances, in which what was defying and resolute did not altogether quell the mortal leaven of pain and dread, they looked as might have looked the two men in the Eastern story who had the power of gazing each other unto death.

What at that moment was raging in Brandon's heart, it is in vain to guess. He doubted not for a moment that he beheld before him his long lost, his anxiously demanded son! Every fibre, every corner of his complex and gloomy soul, that certainly reached, and blasted with a hideous and irresistible glare. The earliest, perhaps the strongest, though often the least acknowledged principle of his mind was the desire to rebuild the fallen honours of his house; its last scion he now beheld before him, covered with the darkest ignominies of the law! He had coveted worldly honours; he beheld their legitimate successor in a convicted felon! He had garnered the few affections he had spared from the objects

of pride and ambition, in his son. That son he was about to adjudge to the gibbet and the hangman! Of late he had increased the hopes of regaining his lost treasure, even to an exultant certainty. Lo! the hopes were accomplished! How? With these thoughts warring, in what manner we dare not even by an epithet express, within him, we may cast one hasty glance on the horror of aggravation they endured, when he heard the prisoner accuse HIM as the cause of his present doom, and felt himself at once the murderer and the judge of his son!

Minutes had elapsed since the voice of the prisoner ceased; and Brandon now drew forth the black cap. As he placed it slowly over his brows, the increasing and corpse-like whiteness of his face became more glaringly visible, by the contrast which this dread head-gear presented. Twice as he essayed to speak his voice failed him, and an indistinct murmur came forth from his hueless lips, and died away like a fitful and feeble wind. But with the third effort the resolution and long self-tyranny of the man conquered, and his voice went clear and unfaltering through the crowd, although the severe sweetness of its wonted tones was gone, and it sounded strange and hollow on the ears that drank it.

"Prisoner at the bar! it has become my duty to announce to you the close of your mortal career. You have been accused of a daring robbery, and after an impartial trial a jury of your countrymen and the laws of your country have decided against you. The recommendation to mercy" (here, only throughout his speech, Brandon gasped convulsively for breath) "so humanely added by the jury, shall be forwarded to the supreme power; but I cannot flatter you with much hope of its success." (The lawyers looked with some surprise at each other; they had expected a far more unqualified mandate, to abjure *all* hope from the jury's recommendation.) "Prisoner, for the opinions you have expressed, you are now only answerable to your God; I forbear to arraign them. For the charge you have made against me, whether true or false, and for the anguish it has given me, may you find pardon at another tribunal! It remains for me only — under a reserve too slight,

as I have said, to afford you a *fair* promise of hope — only to — to” (all eyes were on Brandon; he felt it, exerted himself for a last effort, and proceeded) — “to pronounce on you the sharp sentence of the law! It is, that you be taken back to the prison whence you came, and thence (when the supreme authority shall appoint) to the place of execution, to be there hanged by the neck till you are dead; and the Lord God Almighty have mercy on your soul!”

With this address concluded that eventful trial; and while the crowd, in rushing and noisy tumult, bore towards the door, Brandon, concealing to the last with a Spartan bravery the anguish which was gnawing at his entrails, retired from the awful pageant. For the next half-hour he was locked up with the strange intruder on the proceedings of the court. At the end of that time the stranger was dismissed; and in about double the same period Brandon’s servant re-admitted him, accompanied by another man, with a slouched hat and in a carman’s frock. The reader need not be told that the new comer was the friendly Ned, whose testimony was indeed a valuable corroborative to Dummie’s, and whose regard for Clifford, aided by an appetite for rewards, had induced him to venture to the town of —, although he tarried concealed in a safe suburb, until reassured by a written promise from Brandon of safety to his person, and a sum for which we might almost doubt whether he would not have consented (so long had he been mistaking means for an end) to be hanged himself. Brandon listened to the details of these confederates; and when they had finished, he addressed them thus:—

“I have heard you, and am convinced you are liars and impostors. There is the money I promised you” (throwing down a pocket-book), — “take it; and, hark you, if ever you dare whisper, ay, but a breath of the atrocious lie you have now forged, be sure I will have you dragged from the recess or nook of infamy in which you may hide your heads, and hanged for the crimes you have already committed. I am not the man to break my word. Begone! quit this town instantly! If in two hours hence you are found here, your blood be on your own heads! Begone, I say!”

These words, aided by a countenance well adapted at all times to expressions of a menacing and ruthless character, at once astounded and appalled the accomplices. They left the room in hasty confusion; and Brandon, now alone, walked with uneven steps (the alarming weakness and vacillation of which he did not himself feel) to and fro the apartment. The hell of his breast was stamped upon his features, but he uttered only one thought aloud, —

“I may, — yes, yes, — I *may* yet conceal this disgrace to my name!”

His servant tapped at the door to say that the carriage was ready, and that Lord Mauleverer had bid him remind his master that they dined punctually at the hour appointed.

“I am coming!” said Brandon, with a slow and startling emphasis on each word. But he first sat down and wrote a letter to the official quarter, strongly aiding the recommendation of the jury; and we may conceive how pride clung to him to the last, when he urged the substitution for death of transportation *for life!* As soon as he had sealed this letter, he summoned an express, gave his orders coolly and distinctly, and attempted with his usual stateliness of step to walk through a long passage which led to the outer door. He found himself fail. “Come hither,” he said to his servant, “give me your arm!”

All Brandon’s domestics, save the one left with Lucy, stood in awe of him; and it was with some hesitation that his servant ventured to inquire if his master felt well.

Brandon looked at him, but made no reply. He entered his carriage with slight difficulty, and telling the coachman to drive as fast as possible, pulled down (a general custom with him) all the blinds of the windows.

Meanwhile Lord Mauleverer, with six friends, was impatiently awaiting the arrival of the seventh guest.

“Our august friend tarries!” quoth the Bishop of —, with his hands folded across his capacious stomach. “I fear the turbot your lordship spoke of may not be the better for the length of the trial.”

“Poor fellow!” said the Earl of —, slightly yawning.

"Whom do you mean?" asked Lord Mauleverer, with a smile, — "the bishop, the judge, or the turbot?"

"Not one of the three, Mauleverer, — I spoke of the prisoner."

"Ah, the fine dog! I forgot him," said Mauleverer. "Really, now you mention him, I must confess that he inspires me with great compassion; but, indeed, it is very wrong in him to keep the judge so long!"

"Those hardened wretches have such a great deal to say," mumbled the bishop, sourly.

"True!" said Mauleverer; "a religious rogue would have had some bowels for the state of the church esurient."

"Is it really true, Mauleverer," asked the Earl of —, "that Brandon *is* to succeed —?"

"So I hear," said Mauleverer. "Heavens, how hungry I am!"

A groan from the bishop echoed the complaint.

"I suppose it would be against all decorum to sit down to dinner without him?" said Lord —.

"Why, really, I fear so," returned Mauleverer. "But our health — our health is at stake; we will only wait five minutes more. By Jove, there's the carriage! I beg your pardon for my heathen oath, my lord bishop."

"I forgive you!" said the good bishop, smiling.

The party thus engaged in colloquy were stationed at a window opening on the gravel road, along which the judge's carriage was now seen rapidly approaching; this window was but a few yards from the porch, and had been partially opened for the better reconnoitring the approach of the expected guest.

"He keeps the blinds down still! Absence of mind, or shame at unpunctuality, — which is the cause, Mauleverer?" said one of the party.

"Not shame, I fear!" answered Mauleverer. "Even the indecent immorality of delaying our dinner could scarcely bring a blush to the parchment skin of my learned friend."

Here the carriage stopped at the porch; the carriage door was opened.

"There seems a strange delay," said Mauleverer, peevishly. "Why does not he get out?"

As he spoke, a murmur among the attendants, who appeared somewhat strangely to crowd around the carriage, smote the ears of the party.

"What do they say, — what?" said Mauleverer, putting his hand to his ear.

The bishop answered hastily; and Mauleverer, as he heard the reply, forgot for once his susceptibility to cold, and hurried out to the carriage door. His guests followed.

They found Brandon leaning against the farther corner of the carriage, — a corpse. One hand held the check-string, as if he had endeavoured involuntarily but ineffectually to pull it. The right side of his face was partially distorted, as by convulsion or paralysis; but not sufficiently so to destroy that remarkable expression of loftiness and severity which had characterized the features in life. At the same time the distortion which had drawn up on one side the muscles of the mouth had deepened into a startling broadness the half sneer of derision that usually lurked around the lower part of his face. Thus unwitnessed and abrupt had been the disunion of the clay and spirit of a man who, if he passed through life a bold, scheming, stubborn, unwavering hypocrite, was not without something high even amidst his baseness, his selfishness, and his vices; who seemed less to have loved sin than by some strange perversion of reason to have disdained virtue, and who, by a solemn and awful suddenness of *fate* (for who shall venture to indicate the judgment of the arch and unseen Providence, even when it appears to mortal eye the least obscured?), won the dreams, the objects, the triumphs of hope, to be blasted by them at the moment of acquisition!

CHAPTER XXXVI.,

AND LAST.

SUBTLE, Surly, — Mammon, Dol,
Hot Ananias, Dapper, Drugger, — all
With whom I traded.

The Alchemist.

As when some rural citizen — retired for a fleeting holiday, far from the cares of the world *strepitumque, Romæ*,¹ to the sweet shades of Pentonville or the remoter plains of Clapham — conducts some delighted visitor over the intricacies of that Dædalian masterpiece which he is pleased to call his labyrinth or maze, — now smiling furtively at his guest's perplexity, now listening with calm superiority to his futile and erring conjectures, now maliciously accompanying him through a flattering path in which the baffled adventurer is suddenly checked by the blank features of a thoroughfareless hedge, now trembling as he sees the guest stumbling unawares into the right track, and now relieved as he beholds him after a pause of deliberation wind into the wrong, — even so, O pleasant reader! doth the sage novelist conduct thee through the labyrinth of his tale, amusing himself with thy self-deceits, and spinning forth, in prolix pleasure, the quiet yarn of his entertainment from the involutions which occasion thy fretting eagerness and perplexity. But as when, thanks to the host's good-nature or fatigue, the mystery is once unravelled, and the guest permitted to penetrate even into the concealed end of the leafy maze, the honest cit, satisfied with the pleasant pains he has already bestowed upon his visitor, puts him not to the labour of retracing the steps he hath so erratically trod, but leads him in three strides, and through a simpler path, at once to the mouth of the maze,

¹ "And the roar of Rome."

and dismisseth him elsewhere for entertainment; even so will the prudent narrator, when the intricacies of his plot are once unfolded, occasion no stale and profitless delays to his wearied reader, but conduct him, with as much brevity as convenient, without the labyrinth which has ceased to retain the interest of a secret.

We shall therefore, in pursuance of the cit's policy, relate as rapidly as possible that part of our narrative which yet remains untold. On Brandon's person was found the paper which had contained so fatal an intelligence of his son; and when brought to Lord Mauleverer, the words struck that person (who knew Brandon had been in search of his lost son, whom we have seen that he had been taught however to suppose illegitimate, though it is probable that many doubts whether he had not been deceived must have occurred to his natural sagacity) as sufficiently important to be worth an inquiry after the writer. Dummie was easily found, for he had not yet turned his back on the town when the news of the judge's sudden death was brought back to it; and taking advantage of that circumstance, the friendly Dunnaker remained altogether in the town (albeit his long companion deserted it as hastily as might be), and whiled the time by presenting himself at the jail, and after some ineffectual efforts winning his way to Clifford. Easily tracked by the name he had given to the governor of the jail, he was conducted the same day to Lord Mauleverer; and his narrative, confused as it was, and proceeding even from so suspicious a quarter, thrilled those digestive organs, which in Mauleverer stood proxy for a heart, with feelings as much resembling awe and horror as our good peer was capable of experiencing. Already shocked from his worldly philosophy of indifference by the death of Brandon, he was more susceptible to a remorseful and salutary impression at this moment than he might have been at any other; and he could not, without some twinges of conscience, think of the ruin he had brought on the mother of the being he had but just prosecuted to the death. He dismissed Dummie, and after a little consideration he ordered his carriage, and leaving the funeral

preparations for his friend to the care of his man of business, he set off for London, and the house, in particular, of the Secretary of the Home Department. We would not willingly wrong the noble penitent; but we venture a suspicion that he might not have preferred a personal application for mercy to the prisoner to a written one, had he not felt certain unpleasant qualms in remaining in a country-house overshadowed by ceremonies so gloomy as those of death. The letter of Brandon and the application of Mauleverer obtained for Clifford a relaxation of his sentence. He was left for perpetual transportation. A ship was already about to sail; and Mauleverer, content with having saved his life, was by no means anxious that his departure from the country should be saddled with any superfluous delay.

Meanwhile the first rumour that reached London respecting Brandon's fate was that he had been found in a fit, and was lying dangerously ill at Mauleverer's; and before the second and more fatally sure report arrived, Lucy had gathered from the visible dismay of Barlow, whom she anxiously cross-questioned, and who, really loving his master, was easily affected into communication, the first and more flattering intelligence. To Barlow's secret delight, she insisted instantly on setting off to the supposed sick man; and accompanied by Barlow and her woman, the affectionate girl hastened to Mauleverer's house on the evening after the day the earl left it. Lucy had not proceeded far before Barlow learned, from the gossip of the road, the real state of the case. Indeed, it was at the first stage that with a mournful countenance he approached the door of the carriage, and announcing the inutility of proceeding farther, begged of Lucy to turn back. So soon as Miss Brandon had overcome the first shock which this intelligence gave her, she said with calmness, —

"Well, Barlow, if it be so, we have still a duty to perform. Tell the postboys to drive on!"

"Indeed, madam, I cannot see what use it can be fretting yourself, — and you so poorly. If you will let *me* go, I will see every attention paid to the remains of my poor master."

"When my father lay dead," said Lucy, with a grave and sad sternness in her manner, "he who is now no more sent no proxy to perform the last duties of a brother; neither will I send one to discharge those of a niece, and prove that I have forgotten the gratitude of a daughter. Drive on!"

We have said that there were times when a spirit was stricken from Lucy little common to her in general; and now the command of her uncle sat upon her brow. On sped the horses, and for several minutes Lucy remained silent. Her woman did not dare to speak. At length Miss Brandon turned, and, covering her face with her hands, burst into tears so violent that they alarmed her attendant even more than her previous stillness. "My poor, poor uncle!" she sobbed; and those were all her words.

We must pass over Lucy's arrival at Lord Mauleverer's house; we must pass over the weary days which elapsed till that unconscious body was consigned to dust with which, could it have retained yet one spark of its haughty spirit, it would have refused to blend its atoms. She had loved the deceased incomparably beyond his merits, and resisting all remonstrance to the contrary and all the forms of ordinary custom, she witnessed herself the dreary ceremony which bequeathed the human remains of William Brandon to repose and to the worm. On that same day Clifford received the mitigation of his sentence, and on that day another trial awaited Lucy. We think briefly to convey to the reader what that scene was; we need only observe that Dummie Dunnaker, decoyed by his great love for little Paul, whom he delightedly said he found not the least "stuck up by his great fame and helevation," still lingered in the town, and was not only aware of the relationship of the cousins, but had gleaned from Long Ned, as they journeyed down to —, the affection entertained by Clifford for Lucy. Of the manner in which the communication reached Lucy, we need not speak; suffice it to say, that on the day in which she had performed the last duty to her uncle, she learned for the first time her lover's situation.

On that evening, in the convict's cell, the cousins met.



“ON THAT EVENING, IN THE CONVICT’S CELL, THE COUSINS MET.”

Their conference was low, for the jailer stood within hearing; and it was broken by Lucy's convulsive sobs. But the voice of one whose iron nerves were not unworthy of the offspring of William Brandon, was clear and audible to her ear, even though uttered in a whisper that scarcely stirred his lips. It seemed as if Lucy, smitten to the inmost heart by the generosity with which her lover had torn himself from her at the time that her wealth might have raised him in any other country far above the perils and the crimes of his career in this; perceiving now, for the first time, and in all their force, the causes of his mysterious conduct; melted by their relationship, and forgetting herself utterly in the desolation and dark situation in which she beheld one who, whatever his crimes, had not been criminal towards her; — it seemed as if, carried away by these emotions, she had yielded altogether to the fondness and devotion of her nature, — that she had wished to leave home and friends and fortune, and share with him his punishment and his shame.

“Why,” she faltered, — “why — why not? We are all that is left to each other in the world! Your father and mine were brothers; let me be to you as a sister. What is there left for me here? Not one being whom I love, or who cares for me, — not one!”

It was then that Clifford summoned all his courage, as he answered. Perhaps, now that he felt (though here his knowledge was necessarily confused and imperfect) his birth was not unequal to hers; now that he read, or believed he read, in her wan cheek and attenuated frame that desertion to her was death, and that generosity and self-sacrifice had become too late, — perhaps these thoughts, concurring with a love in himself beyond all words, and a love in her which it was above humanity to resist, altogether conquered and subdued him. Yet, as we have said, his voice breathed calmly in her ear; and his eye only, which brightened with a steady and resolute hope, betrayed his mind. “Live, then!” said he, as he concluded. “My sister, my mistress, my bride, live! In one year from this day — I repeat — I promise it thee!”

The interview was over, and Lucy returned home with a

firm step. She was on foot. The rain fell in torrents, yet even in her precarious state her health suffered not; and when within a week from that time she read that Clifford had departed to the bourne of his punishment, she read the news with a steady eye and a lip that, if it grew paler, did not quiver.

Shortly after that time Miss Brandon departed to an obscure town by the seaside; and there, refusing all society, she continued to reside. As the birth of Clifford was known but to few, and his legitimacy was unsuspected by all except, perhaps, by Mauleverer, Lucy succeeded to the great wealth of her uncle; and this circumstance made her more than ever an object of attraction in the eyes of her noble adorer. Finding himself unable to see her, he wrote to her more than one moving epistle; but as Lucy continued inflexible, he at length, disgusted by her want of taste, ceased his pursuit, and resigned himself to the continued sterility of unwedded life. As the months waned, Miss Brandon seemed to grow weary of her retreat; and immediately on attaining her majority, which she did about eight months after Brandon's death, she transferred the bulk of her wealth to France, where it was understood (for it was impossible that rumour should sleep upon an heiress and a beauty) that she intended in future to reside. Even Warlock (that spell to the proud heart of her uncle) she ceased to retain. It was offered to the nearest relation of the family at a sum which he did not hesitate to close with; and by the common vicissitudes of Fortune, the estate of the ancient Brandons has now, we perceive by a weekly journal, just passed into the hands of a wealthy alderman.

It was nearly a year since Brandon's death when a letter bearing a foreign postmark came to Lucy. From that time her spirits — which before, though subject to fits of abstraction, had been even and subdued, not sad — rose into all the cheerfulness and vivacity of her earliest youth. She busied herself actively in preparations for her departure from this country; and at length the day was fixed, and the vessel was engaged. Every day till that one, did Lucy walk to the seaside, and ascending the highest cliff, spend hours, till the

evening closed, in watching, with seemingly idle gaze, the vessels that interspersed the sea; and with every day her health seemed to strengthen, and the soft and lucid colour she had once worn, to rebloom upon her cheek.

Previous to her departure Miss Brandon dismissed her servants, and only engaged one female, a foreigner, to accompany her. A certain tone of quiet command, formerly unknown to her, characterized these measures, so daringly independent for one of her sex and age. The day arrived, — it was the anniversary of her last interview with Clifford. On entering the vessel it was observed that she trembled violently, and that her face was as pale as death. A stranger, who had stood aloof wrapped in his cloak, darted forward to assist her; that was the last which her discarded and weeping servants beheld of her from the pier where they stood to gaze.

Nothing more in this country was ever known of the fate of Lucy Brandon; and as her circle of acquaintances was narrow, and interest in her fate existed vividly in none save a few humble breasts, conjecture was never keenly awakened, and soon cooled into forgetfulness. If it favoured, after the lapse of years, any one notion more than another, it was that she had perished among the victims of the French Revolution.

Meanwhile let us glance over the destinies of our more subordinate acquaintances.

Augustus Tomlinson, on parting from Long Ned, had succeeded in reaching Calais; and after a rapid tour through the Continent, he ultimately betook himself to a certain literary city in Germany, where he became distinguished for his metaphysical acumen, and opened a school of morals on the Grecian model, taught in the French tongue. He managed, by the patronage he received and the pupils he enlightened, to obtain a very decent income; and as he wrote a folio against Locke, proved that men had innate feelings, and affirmed that we should refer everything not to reason, but to the sentiments of the soul, he became greatly respected for his extraordinary virtue. Some little discoveries were made after his death, which perhaps would have somewhat diminished the general

odour of his sanctity, had not the admirers of his school carefully hushed up the matter, probably out of respect for the "sentiments of the soul!"

Pepper, whom the police did not so anxiously desire to destroy as they did his two companions, might have managed, perhaps many years longer, to graze upon the public commons, had not a letter, written somewhat imprudently, fallen into wrong hands. This, though after creating a certain stir it apparently died away, lived in the memory of the police, and finally conspired, with various peccadilloes, to produce his downfall. He was seized, tried, and sentenced to seven years' transportation. He so advantageously employed his time at Botany Bay, and arranged things there so comfortably to himself, that at the expiration of his sentence he refused to return home. He made an excellent match, built himself an excellent house, and remained in "the land of the blest" to the end of his days, noted to the last for the redundancy of his hair and a certain ferocious coxcombry of aspect.

As for Fighting Attie and Gentleman George, for Scarlet Jem and for Old Bags, we confess ourselves destitute of any certain information of their latter ends. We can only add, with regard to Fighting Attie, "Good luck be with him wherever he goes!" and for mine host of the Jolly Angler, that, though we have not the physical constitution to quaff "a bumper of blue ruin," we shall be very happy, over any tolerable wine and in company with any agreeable convivialist, to bear our part in the polished chorus of —

"Here's to Gentleman George, God bless him!"

Mrs. Lobkins departed this life like a lamb; and Dummie Dunnaker obtained a license to carry on the business at Thames Court. He boasted, to the last, of his acquaintance with the great Captain Lovett, and of the affability with which that distinguished personage treated him. Stories he had, too, about Judge Brandon, but no one believed a syllable of them; and Dummie, indignant at the disbelief, increased, out of vehemence, the marvel of the stories, so that, at length, what was added almost swallowed up what was original, and

Dummie himself might have been puzzled to satisfy his own conscience as to what was false and what was true.

The erudite Peter MacGrawler, returning to Scotland, disappeared by the road. A person singularly resembling the sage was afterward seen at Carlisle, where he discharged the useful and praiseworthy duties of Jack Ketch. But whether or not this respectable functionary *was* our identical Simon Pure, *our* ex-editor of "The Asinæum," we will not take upon ourselves to assert.

Lord Mauleverer, finally resolving on a single life, passed the remainder of his years in indolent tranquillity. When he died, the newspapers asserted that his Majesty was deeply affected by the loss of so old and valued a friend. His furniture and wines sold remarkably high; and a Great Man, his particular intimate, who purchased his books, startled to find, by pencil marks, that the noble deceased had read some of them, exclaimed, not altogether without truth, —

"Ah! Mauleverer might have been a deuced clever fellow — if he had liked it!"

The earl was accustomed to show as a curiosity a ring of great value, which he had received in rather a singular manner. One morning a packet was brought him which he found to contain a sum of money, the ring mentioned, and a letter from the notorious Lovett, in which that person in begging to return his lordship the sums of which he had *twice* assisted to rob him, thanked him, with earnest warmth, for the consideration testified towards him in not revealing his identity with Captain Clifford; and ventured, as a slight testimony of respect, to inclose the aforesaid ring with the sum returned.

About the time Mauleverer received this curious packet, several anecdotes of a similar nature appeared in the public journals; and it seemed that Lovett had acted upon a general principle of restitution, — not always, it must be allowed, the offspring of a robber's repentance. While the idle were marvelling at these anecdotes, came the tardy news that Lovett, after a single month's sojourn at his place of condemnation, had, in the most daring and singular manner, effected his escape. Whether, in his progress up the country, he had

been starved or slain by the natives, or whether, more fortunate, he had ultimately found the means of crossing seas, was as yet unknown. There ended the adventures of the gallant robber; and thus, by a strange coincidence, the same mystery which wrapped the fate of Lucy involved also that of her lover. And here, kind reader, might we drop the curtain on our closing scene, did we not think it might please thee to hold it up yet one moment, and give thee another view of the world behind.

In a certain town of that Great Country where shoes are imperfectly polished¹ and opinions are not prosecuted, there resided, twenty years after the date of Lucy Brandon's departure from England, a man held in high and universal respect, not only for the rectitude of his conduct, but for the energies of his mind, and the purposes to which they were directed. If you asked who cultivated that waste, the answer was, "Clifford!" who procured the establishment of that hospital, "Clifford!" who obtained the redress of such a public grievance, "Clifford!" who struggled for and won such a popular benefit, "Clifford!" In the gentler part of his projects and his undertakings — in that part, above all, which concerned the sick or the necessitous — this useful citizen was seconded, or rather excelled, by a being over whose surpassing loveliness Time seemed to have flown with a gentle and charming wing. There was something remarkable and touching in the love which this couple (for the woman we refer to was Clifford's wife) bore to each other; like the plant on the plains of Hebron, the time which brought to that love an additional strength brought to it also a softer and a fresher verdure. Although their present neighbours were unacquainted with the events of their earlier life previous to their settlement at —, it was known that they had been wealthy at the time they first came to reside there, and that, by a series of fatalities, they had lost all. But Clifford had borne up manfully against fortune; and in a new country, where men who prefer labour to dependence cannot easily starve, he had been enabled to toil upward through the severe

¹ See Captain Hall's late work on America.

stages of poverty and hardship with an honesty and vigour of character which won him, perhaps, a more hearty esteem for every successive effort than the display of his lost riches might ever have acquired him. His labours and his abilities obtained gradual but sure success; and he now enjoyed the blessings of a competence earned with the most scrupulous integrity, and spent with the most kindly benevolence. A trace of the trials they had passed through was discernible in each; those trials had stolen the rose from the wife's cheek, and had sown untimely wrinkles in the broad brow of Clifford. There were moments, too, but they were only moments, when the latter sank from his wonted elastic and healthful cheerfulness of mind into a gloomy and abstracted revery; but these moments the wife watched with a jealous and fond anxiety, and one sound of her sweet voice had the power to dispel their influence; and when Clifford raised his eyes, and glanced from *her* tender smile around his happy home and his growing children, or beheld through the very windows of his room the public benefits he had created, something of pride and gladness glowed on his countenance, and he said, though with glistening eyes and subdued voice, as his looks returned once more to his wife, "I owe these to thee!"

One trait of mind especially characterized Clifford, — indulgence to the faults of others. "Circumstances make guilt," he was wont to say; "let us endeavour to *correct the circumstances*, before we rail against the guilt!" His children promised to tread in the same useful and honourable path that he trod himself. Happy was considered that family which had the hope to ally itself with his.

Such was the after-fate of Clifford and Lucy. Who will condemn us for preferring the moral of that fate to the moral which is extorted from the gibbet and the hulks, — which makes scarecrows, not beacons; terrifies our weakness, not warms our reason. Who does not allow that it is better to repair than to perish, — better, too, to atone as the citizen than to repent as the hermit? Oh, John Wilkes, Alderman of London, and Drawcansir of Liberty, your life was not an

iota too perfect, — your patriotism might have been infinitely purer, your morals would have admitted indefinite amendment, you are no great favourite with us or with the rest of the world, — but you said one excellent thing, for which we look on you with benevolence, nay, almost with respect. We scarcely know whether to smile at its wit or to sigh at its wisdom. Mark this truth, all ye gentlemen of England who would make law as the Romans made *fusces*, — a bundle of rods with an axe in the middle, — mark it, and remember! long may it live, allied with hope in ourselves, but with gratitude in our children, — long after the book which it now “adorns” and “points” has gone to its dusty slumber, — long, long after the feverish hand which now writes it down can defend or enforce it no more: “THE VERY WORST USE TO WHICH YOU CAN PUT A MAN IS TO HANG HIM!”

NOTE.

Page 462.

IN the second edition of this novel there were here inserted two "characters" of "Fighting Attie" and "Gentleman George," omitted in the subsequent edition published by Mr. Bentley in the "Standard Novels." At the request of some admirers of those eminent personages, who considered the biographical sketches referred to impartial in themselves, and contributing to the completeness of the design for which men so illustrious were introduced, they are here retained, though in the more honourable form of a separate and supplementary notice.

FIGHTING ATTIE.

When he dies, the road will have lost a great man, whose foot was rarely out of his stirrup, and whose clear head guided a bold hand. He carried common-sense to its perfection, and he made the straight path the sublimest. His words were few, his actions were many. He was the Spartan of Tobymen, and laconism was the short soul of his professional legislation!

Whatever way you view him, you see those properties of mind which command fortune; few thoughts not confusing each other, — simple elements, and bold. His character in action may be summed in two phrases, — "a fact seized, and a stroke made." Had his intellect been more luxurious, his resolution might have been less hardy; and his hardiness made his greatness. He was one of those who shine but in action, — chimneys (to adapt the simile of Sir Thomas More) that seem useless till you light your fire. So in calm moments you dreamed not of his utility, and only on the road you were struck dumb with the out-breaking of his genius. Whatever situation he was called to, you found in him what you looked for in vain in others; for his strong sense gave to Attie what long experience ought, but often fails, to give to its pos-

sessors. His energy triumphed over the sense of novel circumstance, and he broke in a moment through the cobwebs which entangled lesser natures for years. His eye saw a final result, and disregarded the detail. He robbed his man without chicanery; and took his purse by applying for it rather than scheming. If his enemies wish to detract from his merit, — a merit great, dazzling, and yet solid, — they may, perhaps, say that his genius fitted him better to continue exploits than to devise them; and thus that, besides the renown which he may justly claim, he often wholly engrossed that fame which should have been shared by others: he took up the enterprise where it ceased at Labour, and carried it onwards, where it was rewarded with Glory. Even this charge proves a new merit of address, and lessens not the merit less complicated we have allowed him before. The fame he has acquired may excite our emulation; the envy he has not appeased may console us for obscurity.

Ἄμφι δ' ἀνθρώ-
πων φρεσὶν ἀμπλακίαι
Ἀναρίθμητοι κρέμονται.
Τοῦτο δ' ἀμάχανον εὐρεῖν
Ὅτι νῦν, καὶ ἐν τελευ-
τᾷ φέρτατον ἀνδρὶ τυχεῖν.

PIND. *Olymp.* vii. 1, 43-48.¹

GENTLEMAN GEORGE.

For thee, Gentleman George, for thee, what conclusive valediction remains? Alas! since we began the strange and mumming scene wherein first thou wert introduced, the grim foe hath knocked thrice at thy gates; and now, as we write,² thou art departed thence, — thou art no more! A new lord presides in thine easy-chair, a new voice rings from thy merry board, — thou art forgotten! thou art already, like these pages, a tale that is told to a memory that retaineth not! Where are thy quips and cranks; where thy stately coxcombs and thy regal gauds? Thine house and thy pagoda, thy Gothic chimney and thy Chinese sign-post, — these yet ask the concluding hand. *Thy hand is*

¹ Thus, not too vigorously, translated by Mr. West, —

“But wrapped in error is the human mind,
And human bliss is ever insecure:
Know we what fortune shall remain behind?
Know we how long the present shall endure?”

² In 1830.

cold; their completion, and the enjoyment the completion yields, are for another! Thou sowest, and thy follower reaps; thou buildest, thy successor holds; thou plantest, and thine heir sits beneath the shadow of thy trees, —

“ Neque harum, quas colis, arborum
Te, præter invisas cupressos,
Ulla brevem dominum sequetur ! ” ¹

At this moment thy life, — for thou wert a Great Man to thine order, and they have added thy biography to that of Abershaw and Sheppard, — thy life is before us. What a homily in its events! Gayly didst thou laugh into thy youth, and run through the courses of thy manhood. Wit sat at thy table, and Genius was thy comrade. Beauty was thy handmaid; and Frivolity played around thee, — a buffoon that thou didst ridicule, and ridiculing enjoy! Who among us can look back to thy brilliant era, and not sigh to think that the wonderful men who surrounded thee, and amidst whom thou wert a centre and a nucleus, are for him but the things of history, and the phantoms of a bodiless tradition? Those brilliant suppers, glittering with beauty, the memory of which makes one spot (yet inherited by Bachelor Bill) a haunted and a fairy ground; all who gathered to that Armida's circle, — the Grammonts and the Beauvilliers and the Rochefoucaulds of England and the Road, — who does not feel that to have seen these, though but as Gil Blas saw the festivities of his actors, from the sideboard and behind the chair, would have been a triumph for the earthlier feelings of his old age to recall? What, then, must it have been to have seen them as thou didst see, — thou, the deceased and the forgotten! — seen them from the height of thy youth and power and rank (for early wert thou keeper to a public), and reckless spirits, and lusty capacities of joy? What pleasures where sense lavished its uncounted varieties? What revellings where wine was the least excitement?

Let the scene shift. How stirring is the change! Triumph and glitter and conquest! For thy public was a public of renown; thither came the Warriors of the Ring, — the Heroes of the Cross, — and thou, their patron, wert elevated on their fame! “*Principes pro victoria pugnant, comites pro principe.*”² What visions sweep across us! What glories didst thou witness! Over what conquests didst thou preside! The mightiest epoch, the most wonderful events which the world,

¹ “Nor will any of these trees thou didst cultivate follow thee, the short-lived lord, save the hateful cyprus.”

² “Chiefs for the victory fight, — for chiefs the soldiers.”

thy world, ever knew, — of these was it not indeed, and dazzlingly thine, —

“To share the triumph and partake the gale”?

Let the scene shift. Manhood is touched by age; but Lust is “heeled” by Luxury, and Pomp is the heir of Pleasure; gewgaws and gaud, instead of glory, surround, rejoice, and flatter thee to the last. There rise thy buildings; there lie, secret but gorgeous, the tabernacles of thine ease; and the earnings of thy friends, and the riches of the people whom they plunder, are waters to thine imperial whirlpool. Thou art lapped in ease, as is a silkworm; and profusion flows from thy high and unseen asylum as the rain poureth from a cloud. Much didst thou do to beautify chimney-tops, much to adorn the snuggeries where thou didst dwell. Thieving with thee took a substantial shape; and the robberies of the public passed into a metempsychosis of mortar, and became public-houses. So there and thus, building and planning, didst thou spin out thy latter yarn, till Death came upon thee; and when we looked around, lo! thy brother was on thy hearth. And thy parasites and thy comrades and thine ancient pals and thy portly blowens, they made a murmur, and they packed up their goods; but they turned ere they departed, and they would have worshipped thy brother as they worshipped thee, — but he would not! And thy sign-post is gone and mouldered already; and to the Jolly Angler has succeeded the Jolly Tar! And thy picture is disappearing fast from the print-shops, and thy name from the mouths of men! And thy brother, whom no one praised while thou didst live, is on a steeple of panegyric built above the churchyard that contains thy grave. O shifting and volatile hearts of men! Who would be keeper of a public? Who dispense the wine and the juices that gladden, when the moment the pulse of the hand ceases, the wine and the juices are forgotten?

To History, — for thy name will be preserved in that record which, whether it be the calendar of Newgate or of nations, telleth us alike how men suffer and sin and perish, — to History we leave the sum and balance of thy merits and thy faults. The sins that were thine were those of the man to whom pleasure is all in all: thou wert, from root to branch, sap and in heart, what moralists term the libertine; hence the light wooing, the quick desertion, the broken faith, the organized perfidy, that manifested thy bearing to those gentler creatures who called thee ‘Gentleman George.’ Never to one solitary woman, until the last dull flame of thy dotage, didst thou so behave as to give no foundation to complaint and no voice to wrong. But who shall say be honest to one, but laugh at perfidy to another? Who shall wholly confine

treachery to one sex, if to that sex he hold treachery no offence? So in thee, as in all thy tribe, there was a laxness of principle, an insincerity of faith, even unto men: thy friends, when occasion suited, thou couldst forsake; and thy luxuries were dearer to thee than justice to those who supplied them. Men who love and live for pleasure as thou, are usually good-natured; for their devotion to pleasure arises from the strength of their constitution, and the strength of their constitution preserves them from the irritations of weaker nerves. So wert thou good-natured and often generous; and often with thy generosity didst thou unite a delicacy that showed thou hadst an original and a tender sympathy with men. But as those who pursue pleasure are above all others impatient of interruption, so to such as interfered with thy main pursuit thou didst testify a deep, a lasting, and a revengeful anger. Yet let not such vices of temperament be too severely judged! For to thee were given man's two most persuasive tempters, physical and moral, — Health and Power! Thy talents, such as they were, — and they were the talents of a man of the world, — misled rather than guided thee, for they gave thy mind that demi-philosophy, that indifference to exalted motives, which is generally found in a clever rake. Thy education was wretched; thou hadst a smattering of Horace, but thou couldst not write English, and thy letters betray that thou wert woefully ignorant of logic. The fineness of thy taste has been exaggerated; thou wert unacquainted with the nobleness of simplicity; thy idea of a whole was grotesque and overloaded, and thy fancy in details was gaudy and meretricious. But thou hadst thy hand constantly in the public purse, and thou hadst plans and advisers forever before thee; more than all, thou didst find the houses in that neighbourhood wherein thou didst build, so preternaturally hideous that thou didst require but little science to be less frightful in thy creations. If thou didst not improve thy native village and thy various homes with a solid, a lofty, and a noble taste, thou didst nevertheless very singularly improve. And thy posterity, in avoiding the faults of thy masonry, will be grateful for the effects of thy ambition. The same demi-philosophy which influenced thee in private life exercised a far benigner and happier power over thee in public. Thou wert not idly vexatious in vestries, nor ordinarily tyrannic in thy parish; if thou wert ever arbitrary it was only when thy pleasure was checked, or thy vanity wounded. At other times thou didst leave events to their legitimate course, so that in thy latter years thou wert justly popular in thy parish; and in thy grave thy great good fortune will outshine thy few bad qualities, and men will say of thee with a kindly, not an erring judgment, "In private life he was not worse than the Rufflers who came to this bar; in public life he was better than those who kept a public before

him." Hark ! those huzzas ! what is the burden of that chorus ? Oh, grateful and never time-serving Britons, have ye modified already for another the song ye made so solely in honour of Gentleman George : and must we, lest we lose the custom of the public and the good things of the tap-room, — must we roar with throats yet hoarse with our fervour for the old words, our ardour for the new ?

" Here 's to *Mariner Bill*, God bless him !

God bless him !

God bless him !

Here 's to *Mariner Bill*, God bless him ! "

TOMLINSONIANA;

OR,

THE POSTHUMOUS WRITINGS

OF THE CELEBRATED

AUGUSTUS TOMLINSON,

PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF —

ADDRESSED TO HIS PUPILS,

AND COMPRISING

I.

MAXIMS ON THE POPULAR ART OF CHEATING, ILLUSTRATED BY TEN CHARACTERS, BEING
AN INTRODUCTION TO THAT NOBLE SCIENCE BY WHICH EVERY
MAN MAY BECOME HIS OWN ROGUE.

II.

BRACHYLOGIA; OR, ESSAYS CRITICAL, SENTIMENTAL, MORAL, AND ORIGINAL.

INTRODUCTION.

HAVING lately been travelling in Germany, I spent some time at that University in which Augustus Tomlinson presided as Professor of Moral Philosophy. I found that that great man died, after a lingering illness, in the beginning of the year 1822, perfectly resigned to his fate, and conversing, even on his deathbed, on the divine mysteries of Ethical Philosophy. Notwithstanding the little peccadilloes to which I have alluded in the latter pages of "Paul Clifford," and which his pupils deemed it advisable to hide from —

"The gaudy, babbling, and remorseless day,"

his memory was still held in a tender veneration. Perhaps, as in the case of the illustrious Burns, the faults of a great man endear to you his genius. In his latter days the PROFESSOR was accustomed to wear a light-green silk dressing-gown, and, as he was perfectly bald, a little black velvet cap; his small-clothes were pepper and salt. These interesting facts I learned from one of his pupils. His old age was consumed in lectures, in conversation, and in the composition of the little *morceaux* of wisdom we present to the public. In these essays and maxims, short as they are, he seems to have concentrated the wisdom of his industrious and honourable life. With great difficulty I procured from his executors the manuscripts which were then preparing for the German press. A valuable consideration induced those gentlemen to become philanthropic, and to

consider the inestimable blessings they would confer upon this country by suffering me to give the following essays to the light, in their native and English dress, on the same day whereon they appear in Germany in the graces of foreign disguise.

At an age when, while Hypocrisy stalks, simpers, sidles, struts, and hobbles through the country, Truth also begins to watch her adversary in every movement, I cannot but think these lessons of Augustus Tomlinson peculiarly well-timed. I add them as a fitting Appendix to a Novel that may not inappropriately be termed a Treatise on Social Frauds; and if they contain within them that evidence of diligent attention and that principle of good in which the satire of Vice is only the germ of its detection, they may not, perchance, pass wholly unnoticed; nor be even condemned to that hasty reading in which the Indifference of to-day is but the prelude to the Forgetfulness of to-morrow.

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MAXIMS

ON

THE POPULAR ART OF CHEATING,

ILLUSTRATED BY TEN CHARACTERS;

BEING AN INTRODUCTION TO THAT NOBLE SCIENCE BY WHICH EVERY
MAN MAY BECOME HIS OWN ROGUE.

Set a thief to catch a thief. — *Proverb.*

I.

WHENEVER you are about to utter something astonishingly false, always begin with, "It is an acknowledged fact," etc. Sir Robert Filmer was a master of this method of writing. Thus, with what a solemn face that great man attempted to cheat! "*It is a truth undeniable* that there cannot be any multitude of men whatsoever, either great or small, etc., but that in the same multitude there is one man amongst them *that in nature hath a right to be King of all the rest, — as being the next heir to Adam!*"

II.

When you want something from the public, throw the blame of the asking on the most sacred principle you can find. A common beggar can read you exquisite lessons on this the most important maxim in the art of popular cheating. "*For the love of God, sir, a penny!*"

III.

Whenever on any matter, moral, sentimental, or political, you find yourself utterly ignorant, talk immediately of "The Laws of Nature." As those laws are written nowhere,¹ they

¹ Locke.

are known by nobody. Should any ask you *how* you happen to know such or such a doctrine as the dictate of Nature, clap your hand to your heart and say, "Here!"

IV.

Yield to a man's tastes, and he will yield to your interest.

V.

When you talk to the half-wise, twaddle; when you talk to the ignorant, brag; when you talk to the sagacious, look very humble, and ask their opinion.

VI.

Always bear in mind, my beloved pupils, that the means of livelihood depend not on the virtues, but the vices of others. The lawyer, the statesman, the hangman, the physician, are paid by our sins; nay, even the commoner professions—the tailor, the coachmaker, the upholsterer, the wine-merchant—draw their fortunes, if not their existence, from those smaller vices, our foibles. Vanity is the figure prefixed to the ciphers of Necessity. Wherefore, oh my beloved pupils! never mind what a man's virtues are; waste no time in learning them. Fasten at once on his infirmities. Do to the One as, were you an honest man, you would do to the Many. This is the way to be a rogue individually, as a lawyer is a rogue professionally. Knaves are like critics,¹—"flies that feed on the sore part, and would have nothing to live on were the body in health."²

VII.

Every man finds it desirable to have tears in his eyes at times,—one has a sympathy with humid lids. Providence hath beneficially provided for this want, and given to every man, in its divine forethought, misfortunes painful to recall. Hence, probably, those human calamities which the atheist rails against! Wherefore, when you are uttering some affecting sentiment to your intended dupe, think of the greatest

¹ Nullum simile est quod idem. — EDITOR.

² Tatler.

misfortune you ever had in your life; habit will soon make the association of tears and that melancholy remembrance constantly felicitous. I knew, my dear pupils, a most intelligent Frenchman, who obtained a charming legacy from an old poet by repeating the bard's verses with streaming eyes. "How were you able to weep at will?" asked I (I was young then, my pupils). "Je pensois," answered he, "*à mon pauvre père, qui est mort.*"¹ The union of sentiment with the ability of swindling made that Frenchman a most fascinating creature!

VIII.

Never commit the error of the over-shrewd, and deem human nature worse than it is. Human nature is so damnable good that if it were not for human art, we knaves could not live. The primary elements of a man's mind do not sustain us; it is what he owes to "the pains taken with his education," and "the blessings of civilized society!"

IX.

Whenever you doubt, my pupils, whether your man be a quack or not, decide the point by seeing if your man be a positive asserter. Nothing indicates imposture like confidence. Volney² saith well, "that the most celebrated of charlatans³ and the boldest of tyrants begins his extraordinary tissue of lies by these words, 'There is no doubt in this book!'"

X.

There is one way of cheating people peculiar to the British Isles, and which, my pupils, I earnestly recommend you to import hither, — cheating by subscription. People like to be plundered in company; dupery then grows into the spirit of party. Thus one quack very gravely requested persons to fit up a ship for him and send him round the world as its captain to make discoveries; and another patriotically suggested that £10,000 should be subscribed — for what? — to place

¹ "I used to think of my poor father, who is dead."

² Lectures on History.

³ Mahomet.

him in parliament! Neither of these fellows could have screwed an individual out of a shilling had he asked him for it in a corner; but a printed list, with "His Royal Highness" at the top, plays the devil with English guineas. A subscription for individuals may be considered a society for the ostentatious encouragement of idleness, impudence, beggary, imposture, and other public virtues!

XI.

Whenever you read the life of a great man, I mean a man eminently successful, you will perceive all the qualities given to him are the qualities necessary even to a mediocre rogue. "He possessed," saith the biographer, "the greatest address [namely, the faculty of wheedling]; the most admirable courage [namely, the faculty of bullying]; the most noble fortitude [namely, the faculty of bearing to be bullied]; the most singular versatility [namely, the faculty of saying one thing to one man, and its reverse to another]; and the most wonderful command over the mind of his contemporaries [namely, the faculty of victimizing their purses or seducing their actions]." Wherefore, if luck cast you in humble life, assiduously study the biographies of the great, in order to accomplish you as a rogue; if in the more elevated range of society, be thoroughly versed in the lives of the roguish: so shall you fit yourself to be eminent!

XII.

The hypocrisy of virtue, my beloved pupils, is a little out of fashion nowadays; it is sometimes better to affect the hypocrisy of vice. Appear generously profligate, and swear with a hearty face that you do not pretend to be better than the generality of your neighbours. Sincerity is not less a covering than lying; a frieze great-coat wraps you as well as a Spanish cloak.

XIII.

When you are about to execute some great plan, and to defraud a number of persons, let the first one or two of the

allotted number be the cleverest, shrewdest fellows you can find. You have then a reference that will alone dupe the rest of the world. "That Mr. Lynx is satisfied," will amply suffice to satisfy Mr. Mole of the honesty of your intentions! Nor are shrewd men the hardest to take in; they rely on their strength: invulnerable heroes are necessarily the bravest. Talk to them in a business-like manner, and refer your design at once to their lawyer. My friend John Shamberry was a model in this grand stroke of art. He swindled twelve people to the tune of some thousands, with no other trouble than it first cost him to swindle — whom do you think? — the Secretary to the Society for the Suppression of Swindling!

XIV.

Divide your arts into two classes, — those which cost you little labour, those which cost much. The first, — flattery, attention, answering letters by return of post, walking across a street to oblige the man you intend to ruin; all these you must never neglect. The least man is worth gaining at a small cost. And besides, while you are serving yourself, you are also obtaining the character of civility, diligence, and good-nature. But the arts which cost you much labour — a long subservience to one testy individual; aping the semblance of a virtue, a quality, or a branch of learning which you do not possess, to a person difficult to blind, — all these never begin except for great ends, worth not only the loss of time, but the chance of detection. Great pains for small gains is the maxim of the miser. The rogue should have more *grandeur d'âme*!¹

XV.

Always forgive.

XVI.

If a man owe you a sum of money — pupils though you be of mine, you *may* once in your lives be so silly as to lend — and you find it difficult to get it back, appeal, not to his justice,

¹ Greatness of soul.

but to his charity. The components of justice flatter few men! Who likes to submit to an inconvenience because he ought to do it, — without praise, without even self-gratulation? But charity, my dear friends, tickles up human ostentation deliciously. Charity implies superiority; and the feeling of superiority is most grateful to social nature. Hence the commonness of charity, in proportion to other virtues, all over the world; and hence you will especially note that in proportion as people are haughty and arrogant, will they laud almsgiving and encourage charitable institutions.

XVII.

Your genteel rogues do not sufficiently observe the shrewdness of the vulgar ones. The actual beggar takes advantage of every sore; but the moral swindler is unpardonably dull as to the happiness of a physical infirmity. To obtain a favour, neglect no method that may allure compassion. I knew a worthy curate who obtained two livings by the felicity of a hectic cough, and a younger brother who subsisted for ten years on his family by virtue of a slow consumption.

XVIII.

When you want to possess yourself of a small sum, recollect that the small sum be put into juxtaposition with a great. I do not express myself clearly — take an example. In London there are sharpers who advertise £70,000 to be advanced at four per cent; principals only conferred with. The gentleman wishing for such a sum on mortgage goes to see the advertiser; the advertiser says he must run down and look at the property on which the money is to be advanced; his journey and expenses will cost him a mere trifle, — say, twenty guineas. Let him speak confidently; let the gentleman very much want the money at the interest stated, and three to one but our sharper gets the twenty guineas, — so paltry a sum in comparison to £70,000 though so serious a sum had the matter related to halfpence!

XIX.

Lord Coke has said: "To trace an error to its fountain-head is to refute it." Now, my young pupils, I take it for granted that you are interested in the preservation of error; you do not wish it, therefore, to be traced to its fountain-head. Whenever, then, you see a sharp fellow tracking it up, you have two ways of settling the matter. You may say, with a smile, "Nay, now, sir, you grow speculative, — I admire your ingenuity;" or else look grave, colour up, and say, "I fancy, sir, there is no warrant for this assertion in the most sacred of all authorities!" The Devil can quote Scripture, you know; and a very sensible Devil it is too!

XX.

Rochefoucauld has said: "The hate of favourites is nothing else but the love of favour." The idea is a little cramped; the hate we bear to any man is only the result of our love for some good which we imagine *he* possesses, or which, being in our possession, we imagine he has attacked. Thus envy, the most ordinary species of hate, arises from our value for the glory, or the plate, or the content we behold; and revenge is born from our regard for our fame that has been wounded, or our acres molested, or our rights invaded. But the most noisy of all hatreds is hatred for the rich, from love for the riches. Look well on the poor devil who is always railing at coaches and four! Book him as a man to be bribed!

XXI.

My beloved pupils, few have yet sufficiently studied the art by which the practice of jokes becomes subservient to the science of swindlers. The heart of an inferior is always fascinated by a jest. Men know this in the knavery of elections. Know it now, my pupils, in the knavery of life! When you slap yon cobbler so affectionately on the back, it is your own fault if you do not slap your purpose into him

at the same time. Note how Shakspeare (whom study night and day, — no man hath better expounded the mysteries of roguery!) causes his grandest and most accomplished villain, Richard III., to address his good friends, the murderers, with a jocular panegyric on that hardness of heart on which, doubtless, those poor fellows most piqued themselves, —

“Your eyes drop millstones, where *fools’* eyes drop tears —
I like you, lads!”

Can’t you fancy the knowing grin with which the dogs received this compliment, and the little sly punch in the stomach with which Richard dropped those loving words, “I like you, lads!”

XXII.

As good-nature is the characteristic of the dupe, so should good-temper be that of the knave; the two fit into each other like joints. Happily, good-nature is a Narcissus, and falls in love with its own likeness. And good-temper is to good-nature what the Florimel of snow was to the Florimel of flesh, — an exact likeness made of the coldest materials.

XXIII.

BEING THE PRAISE OF KNAVERY.

A knave is a philosopher, though a philosopher is not necessarily a knave. What hath a knave to do with passions? Every irregular desire he must suppress; every foible he must weed out; his whole life is spent in the acquisition of knowledge: for what is knowledge? — the discovery of human errors! He is the only man always consistent yet ever examining; he knows but one end, yet explores every means; danger, ill-repute, all that terrify other men, daunt not him; he braves all, but is saved from all: for I hold that a knave ceaseth to be the knave — he hath passed into the fool — the moment mischief befalls him. He professes the art of

cheating; but the *art* of cheating is to cheat without peril. He is *teres et rotundus*; strokes fly from the lubricity of his polish, and the shiftings of his circular formation. He who is insensible of the glory of his profession, who is open only to the profit, is no disciple of mine. I hold of knavery, as Plato hath said of virtue, "Could it be seen incarnate, it would beget a personal adoration!" None but those who are inspired by a generous enthusiasm will benefit by the above maxims, nor (and here I warn you solemnly from the sacred ground, till your head be uncovered, and your feet be bared in the awe of veneration) enter with profit upon the following descriptions of character, — that Temple of the Ten Statutes, wherein I have stored and consecrated the most treasured relics of my travelled thoughts and my collected experience.

TEN CHARACTERS.

I.

THE mild, irresolute, good-natured, and indolent man. These qualities are accompanied with good feelings, but no principles. The want of firmness evinces also the want of any peculiar or deeply rooted system of thought. A man conning a single and favourite subject of meditation grows wedded to one or the other of the opinions on which he revolves. A man universally irresolute has generally led a desultory life, and never given his attention long together to one thing. This is a man most easy to cheat, my beloved friends; you cheat him even with his eyes open. Indolence is dearer to him than all things; and if you get him alone and put a question to him point blank, he cannot answer, No.

II.

The timid, suspicious, selfish, and cold man. Generally a character of this description is an excellent man of business, and would at first sight seem to baffle the most ingenious swindler. But you have one hope, — I have rarely found it

deceive me, — this man is usually ostentatious. A cold, a fearful, yet a worldly person has ever an eye upon others; he notes the effect certain things produce on them; he is anxious to learn their opinions, that he may not transgress; he likes to know what the world say of him; nay, his timidity makes him anxious to repose his selfishness on their good report. Hence he grows ostentatious, likes that effect which is favourably talked of, and that show which wins consideration. At him on this point, my pupils!

III.

The melancholy, retired, sensitive, intellectual character. A very good subject this for your knaveries, my young friends, though it requires great discrimination and delicacy. This character has a considerable portion of morbid suspicion and irritation belonging to it, — against these you must guard; at the same time its prevailing feature is a powerful but unacknowledged vanity. It is generally a good opinion of himself, and a feeling that he is not appreciated by others, that make a man reserved; he deems himself unfit for the world because of the delicacy of his temperament, and the want of a correspondent insensibility in those he sees! This is your handle to work on. He is peculiarly flattered, too, on the score of devotion and affection; he exacts in love, as from the world, too much. He is a Lara, whose females must be Medoras; and even his male friends should be extremely like Kaleds! Poor man! you see how easily he can be duped. Mem. — Among persons of this character are usually found those oddities, humours, and peculiarities which are each a handle. No man lives out of the world with impunity to the solidity of his own character. Every new outlet to the humour is a new inlet to the heart.

IV.

The bold, generous, frank, and affectionate man, — usually a person of robust health. His constitution keeps him in

spirits, and his spirits in courage and in benevolence. He is obviously not a hard character, my good young friends, for you to deceive; for he wants suspicion, and all his good qualities lay him open to you. But beware his anger when he finds you out! He is a terrible Othello when his nature is once stung. Mem. — A good sort of character to seduce into illegal practices; makes a tolerable traitor or a capital smuggler. You yourselves must never commit any illegal offence, — aren't there cat's-paws for the chestnuts? As all laws are oppressions (only necessary and often sacred oppressions, which you need not explain to him), and his character is especially hostile to oppression, you easily seduce the person we describe into braving the laws of his country. Yes! the bold, generous, frank, and affectionate man has only to be born in humble life to be sure of a halter!

V.

The bold, selfish, close, grasping man will in all probability cheat *you*, my dear friends. For such a character makes the master-rogue, the stuff from which Nature forms a Richard the Third. You had better leave such a man quite alone. He is bad even to serve. He breaks up his tools when he has done with them. No, you can do nothing with him, my good young men!

VI.

The eating, drinking, unthoughtful, sensual, mechanical man, — the ordinary animal. Such a creature has cunning, and is either cowardly or ferocious; seldom in these qualities he preserves a medium. He is not by any means easy to dupe. Nature defends her mental brutes by the thickness of their hide. Win his mistress if possible; she is the best person to manage him. Such creatures are the natural prey of artful women; their very stolidity covers all but sensuality. To the Samson — the Delilah.

VII.

The gay, deceitful, shrewd, polished, able man, — the courtier, the man of the world. In public and stirring life this is the fit antagonist, — often the successful and conquering rival of Character V. You perceive a man like this varies so greatly in intellect — from the mere butterfly talent to the rarest genius, from the person you see at cards to the person you see in Cabinets, from the ——— to the Chesterfield, from the Chesterfield to the Pericles — that it is difficult to give you an exact notion of the weak points of a character so various. But while he dupes his equals and his superiors, I consider him, my attentive pupils, by no means a very difficult character for an inferior to dupe. And in this manner you must go about it. Do not attempt hypocrisy; he will see through it in an instant. Let him think you at once, and at first sight, a rogue. Be candid on that matter yourself; but let him think you *a useful* rogue. Serve him well and zealously; but own that you do so, because you consider your interest involved in this. This reasoning satisfies him; and as men of this character are usually generous, he will acknowledge its justice by throwing you plenty of sops, and stimulating you with bountiful cordials. Should he not content you herein, appear contented; and profit in betraying him (*that* is the best way to cheat him), not by his failings, but by opportunity. Watch not his character, but your time.

VIII.

The vain, arrogant, brave, amorous, flashy character. This sort of character we formerly attributed to the French, and it is still more common to the Continent than that beloved island which I shall see no more! A creature of this description is made up of many false virtues; above others, it is always profuse where its selfishness is appealed to, not otherwise. You must find, then, what pleases it, and pander to its tastes. So will ye cheat it, — or ye will cheat it also by affecting the false virtues which it admires itself, — rouge your sentiments

highly, and let them strut with a buskined air; thirdly, my good young men, ye will cheat it by profuse flattery, and by calling it in especial "the mirror of chivalry."

IX.

The plain, sensible, honest man, — a favourable, but not elevated specimen of our race. This character, my beloved pupils, you may take in once, but never twice. Nor can you take in such a man as a stranger; he must be your friend or relation, or have known intimately some part of your family. A man of this character is always open, though in a moderate and calm degree, to the duties and ties of life. He will always do something to serve his friend, his brother, or the man whose father pulled *his* father out of the Serpentine. Affect with him no varnish; exert no artifice in attempting to obtain his assistance. Candidly state your wish for such or such a service, sensibly state your pretensions, modestly hint at your gratitude. So may you deceive him once, then leave him alone forever!

X.

The fond, silly, credulous man, all impulse and no reflection, — how my heart swells when I contemplate this excellent character! What a Canaan for you does it present! I envy you launching into the world with the sanguine hope of finding all men such! Delightful enthusiasm of youth, — would that the hope could be realized! Here is the very incarnation of gullibility. You have only to make him love you, and no hedgehog ever sucked egg as you can suck him. Never be afraid of his indignation; go to him again and again; only throw yourself on his neck and weep. To gull him once is to gull him always; get his first shilling, and then calculate what you will do with the rest of his fortune. Never desert so good a man for new friends; that would be ungrateful in you! And take with you, by the way, my good young gentlemen, this concluding maxim: Men are like lands; you will get

more by lavishing all your labour again and again upon the easy than by ploughing up new ground in the sterile!

Legislators, — wise, good, pious men, — the Tom Thumbs of moral science, who make giants first, and then kill them,¹ — you think the above lessons villanous. I honour your penetration. They are not proofs of my villany, but of your folly! Look over them again, and you will see that they are designed to show that while ye are imprisoning, transporting, and hanging thousands every day, a man with a decent modicum of cunning might practise every one of those lessons which seem to you so heinous, and not one of your laws could touch him!

¹ He made the giants first, and then he killed them.

The Tragedy of Tom Thumb.

BRACHYLOGIA;

OR,

ESSAYS,

CRITICAL, SENTIMENTAL, MORAL, AND ORIGINAL.

ADDRESSED TO HIS PUPILS

By AUGUSTUS TOMLINSON.

THE irony in the preceding essays is often lost sight of in the present. The illness of this great man, which happened while composing these little gems, made him perhaps more in earnest than when in robust health. — *Editor's Note.*

ON THE MORALITY TAUGHT BY THE RICH TO THE POOR.

As soon as the urchin pauper can totter out of doors, it is taught to pull off its hat, and pull its hair to the quality. "A good little boy," says the squire; "there's a ha'penny for you." The good little boy glows with pride. That ha'penny instils deep the lesson of humility. Now goes our urchin to school. Then comes the Sunday teaching,—before church,—which enjoins the poor to be lowly, and to honour every man better off than themselves. A pound of honour to the squire, and an ounce to the beadle. Then the boy grows up; and the Lord of the Manor instructs him thus: "Be a good boy, Tom, and I'll befriend you. Tread in the steps of your father; he was an excellent man, and a great loss to the parish; he was a very *civil, hard-working*, well-behaved creature; knew his station;—mind, and do like him!" So perpetual hard labour and plenty of cringing make the ancestral virtues to be perpetuated to peasants till the day of judgment! Another insidious distillation of morality is conveyed through a general praise of the poor. You hear false friends of the people,

who call themselves Liberals and Tories, who have an idea of morals half chivalric, half pastoral, agree in lauding the unfortunate creatures whom they keep at work for them. But mark the virtues the poor are always to be praised for, — industry, honesty, and content. The first virtue is extolled to the skies, because industry gives the rich everything they have; the second, because honesty prevents an iota of the said everything being taken away again; and the third, because content is to hinder these poor devils from ever objecting to a lot so comfortable to the persons who profit by it. This, my pupils, is the morality taught by the rich to the poor!

EMULATION.

The great error of emulation is this: we emulate effects without inquiring into causes. When we read of the great actions of a man, we are on fire to perform the same exploits, without endeavouring to ascertain the precise qualities which enabled the man we imitate to commit the actions we admire. Could we discover these, how often might we discover that their origin was a certain temper of body, a certain peculiarity of constitution, and that, wish we for the same success, we should be examining the nature of our *bodies* rather than sharpening the faculties of our minds, — should use dumbbells, perhaps, instead of books; nay, on the other hand, contract some grievous complaint rather than perfect our moral salubrity. Who should say whether Alexander would have been a hero had his neck been straight; or Boileau a satirist, had he never been pecked by a turkey? It would be pleasant to see you, my beloved pupils, after reading “Quintus Curtius,” twisting each other’s throat; or, fresh from Boileau, hurrying to the poultry-yard in the hope of being mutilated into the performance of a second “Lutrin.”

CAUTION AGAINST THE SCOFFERS OF “HUMBUG.”

My beloved pupils, there is a set of persons in the world, daily increasing, against whom you must be greatly on your

guard; there is a fascination about them. They are people who declare themselves vehemently opposed to humbug, — fine, liberal fellows, clear-sighted, yet frank. When these sentiments arise from reflection, well and good, — they are the best sentiments in the world; but many take them up second hand. They are very inviting to the indolence of the mob of gentlemen who see the romance of a noble principle, not its utility. When a man looks at everything through this dwarfing philosophy, everything has a great modicum of humbug. You laugh with him when he derides the humbug in religion, the humbug in politics, the humbug in love, the humbug in the plausibilities of the world; but you may cry, my dear pupils, when he derides what is often the safest of all *practically* to deride, — the humbug in common honesty! Men are honest from religion, wisdom, prejudice, habit, fear, and stupidity; but the few only are wise; and the persons we speak of deride religion, are beyond prejudice, unawed by habit, too indifferent for fear, and too experienced for stupidity.

POPULAR WRATH AT INDIVIDUAL IMPRUDENCE.

You must know, my dear young friends, that while the appearance of magnanimity is very becoming to you, and so forth, it will get you a great deal of ill-will if you attempt to practise it to your own detriment. Your neighbours are so invariably, though perhaps insensibly, actuated by self-interest — self-interest¹ is so entirely, though every twaddler denies it, the axis of the moral world — that they fly into a rage with him who seems to disregard it. When a man ruins himself, just hear the abuse he receives; his neighbours take it as a personal affront!

DUM DEFLUAT AMNIS.

One main reason why men who have been great are disappointed, when they retire to private life, is this: Memory

¹ Mr. Tomlinson is wrong here; but his ethics were too much narrowed to utilitarian principles. — EDITOR.

makes a chief source of enjoyment to those who cease eagerly to hope; but the memory of the great recalls only that public life which has disgusted them. Their private life hath slipped insensibly away, leaving faint traces of the sorrow or the joy which found them too busy to heed the simple and quiet impressions of mere domestic vicissitude.

SELF-GLORIFIERS.

Providence seems to have done to a certain set of persons—who always view their own things through a magnifying medium, deem their house the best in the world, their gun the truest, their very pointer a miracle—as Colonel Hanger suggested to economists to do; namely, provide their servants each with a pair of large spectacles, so that a lark might appear as big as a fowl, and a twopenny loaf as large as a quartern.

THOUGHT ON FORTUNE.

It is often the easiest move that completes the game. Fortune is like the lady whom a lover carried off from all his rivals by putting an additional lace upon his liveries.

WIT AND TRUTH.

People may talk about fiction being the source of fancy, and wit being at variance with truth. Now, some of the wittiest things in the world are witty solely from their truth. Truth is the soul of a good saying. "You assert," observes the Socrates of modern times, "that we have a *virtual* representation; very well, let us have a virtual taxation too!" Here the wit is in the fidelity of the *sequitur*. When Columbus broke the egg, where was the wit? In the completeness of conviction in the broken egg.

AUTO-THEOLOGY.

Not only every sect but every individual modifies the general attributes of the Deity towards assimilation with his own character: the just man dwells on the justice, the stern upon the

wrath; the attributes that do not please the worshipper he insensibly forgets. Wherefore, O my pupils, you will not smile when you read in Barnes that the pygmies declared Jove himself was a pygmy. The pious vanity of man makes him adore his own qualities under the pretence of worshipping those of his God.

GLORIOUS CONSTITUTION.

A sentence is sometimes as good as a volume. If a man ask you to give him some idea of the laws of England, the answer is short and easy: In the laws of England there are somewhere about one hundred and fifty laws by which a poor man may be hanged, but not one by which he can obtain justice for nothing!

ANSWER TO THE POPULAR CANT THAT GOODNESS IN A STATESMAN IS BETTER THAN ABILITY.

As in the world we must look to actions, not motives, so a knave is the man who injures you; and you do not inquire whether the injury be the fruit of malice or necessity. Place, then, a fool in power, and he becomes unconsciously the knave. Mr. Addington stumbled on the two very worst and most villanous taxes human malice could have invented, — one on medicines, the other on justice. What tyrant's fearful ingenuity could afflict us more than by impeding at once redress for our wrongs, and cure for our diseases? Mr. Addington was the fool *in se*, and therefore the knave in office; but, bless you! he never meant it!

COMMON-SENSE.

Common-sense, — common-sense, — of all phrases, all catch-words, this is often the most deceitful and the most dangerous. Look, in especial, suspiciously upon common-sense whenever it is opposed to discovery. Common-sense is the experience of every day. Discovery is something against the

experience of every day. No wonder, then, that when Galileo proclaimed a great truth, the universal cry was, "Pshaw! common-sense will tell you the reverse." Talk to a sensible man for the first time on the theory of vision, and hear what his common-sense will say to it. In a letter in the time of Bacon, the writer, of no mean intellect himself, says: "It is a pity the chancellor should set his opinion against the experience of so many centuries and the dictates of common-sense." Common-sense, then, so useful in household matters, is less useful in the legislative and in the scientific world than it has been generally deemed. Naturally, the advocate for what has been tried, and averse to what is speculative, it opposes the new philosophy that appeals to reason, and clings to the old which is propped by sanction.

LOVE, AND WRITERS ON LOVE.

My warm, hot-headed, ardent young friends, ye are in the flower of your life, and writing verses about love, — let us say a word on the subject. There are two species of love common to all men and to most animals,¹ — one springs from the senses, the other grows out of custom. Now, neither of these, my dear young friends, is the love that you pretend to feel, — the love of *lovers*. Your passion, having only its foundation (and that unacknowledged) in the senses, owes everything else to the imagination. Now, the imagination of the majority is different in complexion and degree in every country and in every age; so also, and consequently, is the love of the imagination. As a proof, observe that you sympathize with the romantic love of other times or nations only in proportion as you sympathize with their poetry and imaginative literature. The love which stalks through the "Arcadia" or "Amadis of Gaul" is to the great bulk of readers coldly insipid or solemnly ridiculous. Alas! when those works excited enthusiasm, so did the love which they describe. The long speeches, the icy compliments, expressed the feeling of the day. The love madrigals of the time of

¹ Most animals; for some appear insensible to the love of custom.

Shenstone, or the brocade gallantries of the French poets in the last century, any woman now would consider hollow or childish, imbecile or artificial. *Once* the songs were natural, and the love seductive. And now, my young friends, in the year 1822, in which I write, and shall probably die, the love which glitters through Moore, and walks so ambitiously ambiguous through the verse of Byron; the love which you consider now so deep and so true; the love which tingles through the hearts of your young ladies, and sets you young gentlemen gazing on the evening star, — all that love too will become unfamiliar or ridiculous to an after age; and the young aspirings and the moonlight dreams and the vague fiddle-de-dees which ye now think so touching and so sublime will go, my dear boys, where Cowley's Mistress and Waller's Sacharissa have gone before, — go with the Sapphos and the Chloes, the elegant "charming fairs," and the chivalric "most beauteous princesses!" The only love-poetry that stands through all time and appeals to all hearts is that which is founded on either or both the species of love natural to all men, — the love of the senses, and the love of custom. In the latter is included what middle-aged men call the rational attachment, the charm of congenial minds, as well as the homely and warmer accumulation of little memories of simple kindness, or the mere brute habitude of seeing a face as one would see a chair. These, sometimes singly, sometimes skilfully blended, make the theme of those who have perhaps loved the most honestly and the most humanly; these yet render Tibullus pathetic, and Ovid a master over tender affections; and these, above all, make that irresistible and all-touching inspiration which subdues the romantic, the calculating, the old, the young, the courtier, the peasant, the poet, the man of business, in the glorious love-poetry of Robert Burns.

THE GREAT ENTAILED.

The great inheritance of man is a commonwealth of blunders. One race spend their lives in botching the errors transmitted to them by another; and the main cause of all political,

that is, all the worst and most general, blunders is this, — the same rule we apply to individual cases we will not apply to public. All men consent that swindling for a horse is swindling, — they punish the culprit and condemn the fault. But in a State there is no such unanimity. Swindling, Lord help you! is called by some fine name; and cheating grows grandiloquent, and styles itself "Policy." In consequence of this there is always a battle between those who call things by their right names and those who pertinaciously give them the wrong ones. Hence all sorts of confusion. This confusion extends very soon to the laws made for individual cases; and thus in old States, though the world is still agreed that private swindling is private swindling, there is the Devil's own difficulty in punishing the swindling of the public. The art of swindling now is a different thing to the art of swindling a hundred years ago; but the laws remain the same. Adaptation in private cases is innovation in public; so, without repealing old laws, they make new. Sometimes these are effectual, but more often not. Now, my beloved pupils, a law is a gun which if it misses a pigeon always kills a crow; if it does not strike the guilty, it hits some one else. As every crime creates a law, so in turn every law creates a crime; and hence we go on multiplying sins and evils, and faults and blunders, till society becomes the organized disorder for picking pockets.

THE REGENERATION OF A KNAVE.

A man who begins the world by being a fool often ends it by becoming a knave; but he who begins as a knave, if he be a rich man (and so not hanged), may end, my beloved pupils, in being a pious creature. And this is the wherefore: "a knave early" soon gets knowledge of the world. One vice worn out makes us wiser than fifty tutors. But wisdom causes us to love quiet, and in quiet we do not sin. He who is wise and sins not can scarcely fail of doing good; for let him but *utter* a new truth, and even his imagination cannot conceive the limit of the good he may have done to man!

STYLE.

Do you well understand what a wonderful thing style is? I think not; for in the exercises you sent me, your styles betrayed that no very earnest consideration had been lavished upon them. Know, then, that you must pause well before you take up any model of style. On your style often depends your own character, — almost always the character given you by the world. If you adopt the lofty style, — if you string together noble phrases and swelling sonora, — you have expressed, avowed, a frame of mind which you will insensibly desire to act up to; the desire gradually begets the capacity. The life of Dr. Parr is Dr. Parr's style put in action; and Lord Byron makes himself through existence unhappy for having accidentally slipped into a melancholy current of words. But suppose you escape this calamity by a peculiar hardihood of temperament, you escape not the stamp of popular opinion. Addison must ever be held by the vulgar the most amiable of men, because of the social amenity of his diction; and the admirers of language will always consider Burke a nobler spirit than Fox, because of the grandeur of his sentences. How many wise sayings have been called jests because they were wittily uttered! How many nothings swelled their author into a sage, ay, a saint, because they were strung together by the old hypocrite nun, — Gravity!

THE END.



F.M.
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